



ESSAYS AND STUDIES



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BY

JOHN CHURTON COLLINS
“

“ *Mehr unordentliche Collectanea zu einem Buche, als ein Buch.*”

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TO MY WIFE

PREFACE

OF the Essays collected in the present volume four originally appeared in the *Quarterly Review* between October 1878 and July 1892, and one, the Essay on Menander, in the *Cornhill Magazine* for May 1879. It has not been thought necessary to recast their form, but they are not mere reproductions. They have all of them been revised and enlarged, two of them so extensively that they may be said to have been almost rewritten.

Whether I am justified in claiming for these Essays an exemption from the ordinary fate of contributions to periodical literature, by collecting them into a volume, I must leave it to others to decide. I can only say, for my own part, that I should never have ventured to submit them a second time to public notice, even in their present carefully revised and greatly enlarged form, had I relied only on any supposed intrinsic literary merit in them.

They have reappeared here because, without any pretension to being authoritative, they at least show reason why certain conventional literary verdicts, in some cases of important concern, should be reconsidered; because they endeavour to contribute something to a more judicial critical estimate and a fuller historical study of writings which are of permanent interest; and because both occasionally and comprehensively they enter a protest against the mischievous tendencies of the New School of Criticism, a school as inimical to good taste and good sense as it is to morals and decency.

Exception may perhaps be taken to the strictures on Mr. Addington Symonds' book, and I should like to add that when I heard of his lamented death I determined, should the article ever be reprinted, to suppress them. But on reconsideration I found I had no choice. Nothing could have justified the appearance of those strictures during Mr. Symonds' lifetime if they are not equally justified when he lives only in the power and influence of his writings. There is no need for me to say with Bentley *Non nostrum est κειμένους ἐπεμβαίνειν*, for it was in no spirit of personal hostility that I wrote what I thought it a duty to write nearly ten years ago; and it is with the liveliest sense of the great loss which English Litera-

ture has sustained by his death that I again perform what I conceive to be a duty in reprinting what I then wrote.

My thanks are due to Mr. John Murray and to Messrs. Smith and Elder for allowing me to reprint these Essays, and to Mr. Percy Wallace for his great kindness in assisting me to see them through the press.

J. C. C.

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JOHN DRYDEN¹

NEARLY two centuries have passed since the coffin of Dryden was reverently laid by those who loved and honoured him in the grave of the Father of our Poetry; and in spite of all the caprices in taste, in opinion, in fashion, to which the popular judgment in every age is liable, in spite of revolutions in criticism which have scarcely left a verdict of our forefathers unchallenged, and revolutions in poetry which have dethroned the dynasties of the last century, no one has ever yet grudged his ashes the proud distinction thus claimed for them. His services had indeed been manifold and splendid. He had determined the bent of a great literature at a great crisis. He had banished for ever the unpruned luxuriance, the licence, the essentially uncritical spirit, which had marked expression in the literature of Elizabeth and James, and he had vindicated the substitution of a style which should proceed on critical principles,

¹ *Life and Works of John Dryden.* By Sir Walter Scott, Bart. 8vo. 18 vols. 1821.

The Poetical Works of John Dryden. Edited, with a Memoir, Revised Text, and Notes, by W. D. Christie, M.A., of Trinity College, Cambridge. London, 1870.

which should aim at terseness, precision, and point, should learn to restrain itself, should master the mysteries of selection and suppression. He had rescued our poetry from the thralldom of a school which was labouring, with all the resources of immense learning, consummate skill, and abundant genius, to corrupt taste and pollute style with the vices of Marini and Gongora. He had brought home to us the masterpieces of the Roman Classics, and he had taught us how to understand and interpret them. He had given us the true canons of classical translation. He had shown us how our language could adapt itself with precision to the various needs of didactic prose, of lyric poetry, of argumentative exposition, of satirical invective, of easy narrative, of sonorous declamation. He had exhibited for the first time in all their fullness the power, ductility, and compass of the heroic couplet; and he had demonstrated the possibility of reasoning closely and vigorously in verse, without the elliptical obscurity of Fulke Greville on the one hand or the painful condensation of Davies on the other. Of English classical satire he had practically been the creator. For Wyatt had taken Alamanni and Ariosto for his models, Skelton and Roy had seldom risen above doggerel; Spenser had indeed affected the heroic style, but, cumbersome, prolix, and uncouth, he had no pretension to classicism. And what was true of Spenser had been equally true of Gascoigne. The Roman satirists had certainly found disciples and imitators in Donne, Hall, Marston, and Lodge, but if we except Hall, who is, in point of

style, incomparably superior to his brethren, the disciples bear little resemblance to their masters. If they succeed in reflecting anything in their originals, it is in reflecting only too faithfully what is most insufferable in the style of Persius. Their diction is cramped, jejune, affected, and obscure, their tone and colour dull and coarse. Nor had satire made any advance in passing successively through the hands of Wither, Cleveland, Marvell, Butler, and Oldham. It was reserved for Dryden to raise it to the level of that superb satirical literature which Quintilian claimed as the peculiar and exclusive product of Roman genius. And these had not been his only services. He had reconstructed and popularised the poetry of romance. He had inaugurated a new era in English prose, and a new era in English criticism. The revolution which transformed the style most characteristic of the classics of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries into that most characteristic of the classics of the eighteenth century may, it is true, be traced historically to Hobbes, Cowley, Denham,¹ and Sprat. But this in no way detracts from the honour due to Dryden. In his writings the new style not only found its most perfect expression, but became influential in literature. From the appearance of his dissertations, prefaces, and dedications dates a time when a return to the older models was impossible.

His influence on our literature in almost all its

¹ See particularly his admirable Preface to his version of the second *Æneid*.

branches has indeed been prodigious. "Perhaps," observes Johnson, "no nation ever produced a writer that enriched his language with such a variety of models." He is one of those figures which are constantly before us, and if his writings in their entirety are not as familiar to us as they were to our forefathers, their influence is to be traced in ever-recurring allusion and quotation; they have moulded or leavened much of our prose, more of our verse, and almost all our earlier criticism. His genius has, moreover, been consecrated by the praises of men who now share his own literary immortality. It would in truth be difficult to name a single writer of distinction between the latter half of the seventeenth century and the commencement of the present who has not in some form recorded his obligations to him. Wycherley addressed him in a copy of verses which embody probably the only sincere compliment he ever paid to a fellow-creature, and what Wycherley has recorded in verse Congreve has recorded in prose. Garth, in his admirable preface to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, speaks of him as one of the greatest poets who ever trod on earth, and has defined with a happy precision his various and versatile powers. Addison and Pope forgot their mutual jealousies to unite in loyal homage to the genius of their common master¹; and Gray, in those noble verses in which he ranks him second only to Shakspeare and Milton, was true

¹ There is no good authority for the story circulated by Tonson about Addison and Steele joining in a conspiracy to detract from Dryden's reputation. Wherever Addison refers to Dryden it is always in the highest terms.

to the traditions of a long line of illustrious disciples. Churchill, who might with care perhaps have rivalled him as a satirist, dedicates to his memory a fine apostrophe, which seems to kindle with the genius it celebrates. Johnson has discussed his merits in a masterpiece of criticism, and Goldsmith has laid a graceful tribute at his shrine. Nor were Burke and Gibbon silent. Charles Fox not only pronounced him to be the greatest name in our literature, but has lavished praises almost grotesque in their excess of idolatrous enthusiasm. If Wordsworth with his habitual bigotry, and Landor with his habitual intemperance, attempted to reverse the verdict of five generations, Byron and Scott, accepting the legacy which the dying poet had more than a hundred years before bequeathed to Congreve, "shaded the laurels which had descended to them," and vindicated with jealous fondness the fame of their great predecessor.

John Dryden, the eldest son of Erasmus Driden and Mary, daughter of the Rev. Henry Pickering, was born at Aldwinckle, a village near Oundle in Northamptonshire, on the 9th of August 1631. There is a local tradition that he first saw the light in the parsonage house of Aldwinckle All Saints, then the residence of his maternal grandfather. The truth of this tradition has been questioned by the biographers, who, on the authority of Malone, have asserted that Mr. Pickering did not become rector till 1647, and that consequently there are no reasonable grounds for supposing that Dryden was born there

in 1631. But Mr. Christie, ascertaining that Pickering became rector in 1597, not in 1647, has corroborated the truth of the old tradition, and justified the claims of the little room, which is still shown, to the reverence of visitors. His family was gentle and eminently respectable; and, though two of his sisters married small tradesmen, and one of his brothers became a tobacconist in London, he could still remind the Lady Elizabeth Howard that on his mother's side he could number titled relatives who had enjoyed the friendship of James I., and sat in judgment on his successor. Poets have seldom been distinguished for adhering to the political and religious traditions which they have inherited, and Dryden is no exception to the rule. His father and his mother were not only Puritans themselves, but belonged to families which had made themselves conspicuous by their opposition to the Crown, and by the consistency and zeal with which they had upheld the principles of their sect. His grandfather had been imprisoned for refusing loan-money to Charles I. His uncle, Sir John Driden, was accused of having turned the chancel of his church at Canons-Ashby into a barn, and Mr. Christie thinks it not improbable that his father was a Committee-man of the Commonwealth times. Of his early youth little is known. He had, he tells us, read Polybius in English when he was ten years old, "and even then had some dark notions of the prudence with which he conducted his design"—an early instance of his characteristic preference for solid and philosophic literature as distinguished from

romantic and imaginative. If the inscription on the monument erected by his cousin, Mrs. Creed, in Tichmarsh Church be trustworthy, he received the rudiments of his education somewhere in that village. From Tichmarsh he passed to Westminster School, probably about 1642. We have now no means of knowing why this school was selected; but the choice was a wise one, and young Dryden arrived at a fortunate time. Three years before, the languid and inefficient Osbolston had been ejected by Laud from the headmastership; and the school, now in the vigorous hands of Richard Busby, was about to enter on a career of unparalleled distinction. During his tenure of office—to employ the phraseology which he loved to affect—Westminster sent up to the Universities more lads destined afterwards to become famous in theology, in scholarship, in literature, and in public life, than any other English school could boast of doing in two centuries. In Busby Mulcaster lived again. Like Mulcaster he was a man whom nature had endowed with versatile powers which circumstances had made it impossible for him to display actively, but which expressed themselves in ready and delighted sympathy whenever he recognised their presence in others. At Oxford he had been distinguished, not only by his classical and theological attainments, but by his abilities as an orator, as a talker, and as an amateur actor. The skill with which he had sustained a leading character in Cartwright's comedy, *The Royal Slave*, on the occasion of Charles I.'s visit to Oxford, was long remembered in the Uni-

versity. For upwards of half a century he ruled Westminster with a severity which has been pleasantly ridiculed by Pope, and feelingly described by more than one of his illustrious pupils. But he could reflect with pride, at the end of his long and laborious life, that he had nursed the young genius of Dryden, Lee, Prior, Saunders, Rowe, King, and Duke; that he had moulded the youth of Locke and South; had imbued with literary tastes which never left them the practical abilities of Charles Montagu and Stepney; had laid the foundations of Atterbury's elegant scholarship, of Michael Maittaire's wide and varied erudition, and of that learning which made Edmund Smith the marvel of his contemporaries; had taught Freind "to speak as Terence spoke," and Alsop to recall the refined wit of Horace¹; that eight of his pupils had been raised to the Bench, that no less than sixteen had become Bishops.²

His influence on Dryden was undoubtedly considerable. He saw and encouraged in every way his peculiar bent. Despairing, probably, of ever making him an exact scholar, he taught him to approach Virgil and Horace, not so much from the philological

¹ Let Freind affect to speak as Terence spoke,
And Alsop never but like Horace joke.—*Pope*.

² Steele gives a remarkable testimony to Busby's genius as a teacher. "I must confess, and have often reflected upon it, that I am of opinion Busby's genius for education had as great an effect upon the age he lived in as that of any ancient philosopher, without excepting one, had upon his contemporaries. I have known a great number of his scholars, and am confident I could discover a stranger who had been such with a very little conversation. Those of good parts who have passed through his instruction have such a peculiar readiness of fancy and delicacy of taste as is seldom found in men educated elsewhere, though of equal talents."

as from the literary side. He taught him to relish the austere beauties of the Roman satirists, and with admirable tact set him to turn Persius and others into English verse, instead of submitting him to the usual drudgery of Latin composition. Dryden never forgot his obligations to Busby. Thirty years afterwards, when the young Westminster boy had become the first poet and the first critic of his age, he addressed his master, then a very old man, in some of the most beautiful verses he ever wrote. With exquisite propriety he dedicated to him his translation of the Satire in which Persius records his reverence and gratitude to Cornutus:—

Yet never could be worthily express'd
How deeply thou art seated in my breast.
When first my childish robe resign'd the charge,
And left me unconfin'd to live at large.
Just at that age when manhood set me free,
I then deposed myself and left the reins to thee.
On thy wise bosom I repos'd my head,
And by my better Socrates was bred.
My reason took the bent of thy command,
Was form'd and polish'd by thy skilful hand.

From Westminster young Dryden proceeded to Trinity College, Cambridge. He was entered on the 18th of May 1650; he matriculated in the following July, and on the 2nd of October, the same year, he was elected a scholar on the Westminster Foundation. He probably carried up to Trinity enough Latin to enable him to read with facility the Roman classics, and enough Greek to enable him to follow a Greek text in a Latin version. It may be questioned whether his attainments in Greek ever went beyond this, and he has given us ample opportunities of

judging. In his renderings from Homer and Theocritus he always follows the Latin translation. What he knows of Aristophanes and the Tragedians he appears to have derived chiefly from the French. He had plainly not read Polybius and Plutarch in the original; Longinus, to whom in his later writings he frequently refers, he approached through Boileau. With Plato, with the orators, and with the less known poets, his acquaintance is very scanty.

Of his life at Cambridge very little is known. Like Milton before him, and like Gray, Wordsworth, and Coleridge after him, he appears to have had no respect for his teachers, and to have taken his education into his own hands. From independence to rebellion is an easy step, and an entry may still be read in the Conclusion-book at Trinity, which charges him with disobedience to the Vice-Master and with contumacy in taking the punishment inflicted on him. It would seem also from an allusion in a satire of Shadwell's that he got into some scrape for insulting a young nobleman, which nearly ended in expulsion; but the details are too obscure to warrant any definite conclusion. That he studied hard, however, in his own way is likely enough. He had, at all events, the credit of having read over and very well understood all the Greek and Roman poets. He taught himself Italian, French, and perhaps Spanish, and impressed his contemporaries as being "a man of good parts and learning."¹ To Trinity he gratefully acknowledged

¹ See an interesting letter lately discovered by Mr. Aldis Wright in the Library of Trinity College.

the chief part of his education, though, like his predecessors Marvell and Cowley, he probably owed little or nothing to anybody but himself.

The University, still agitated by the civil commotions which had shaken England to its centre, was not at that time distinguished either by scholarship or by sympathy with polite literature. The age of Milton, Marvell, Cowley, and May had just passed; the age of Bentley, Barnes, and Middleton had not arrived. What activity there was, was principally in a philosophical and scientific direction. Dryden's tutor, Templer, had engaged himself in a controversy with Hobbes. Cudworth was collecting materials for his confutation of Atheism. Whichcote and Smith were rationalising theology. Henry More was unravelling the mysteries of Plotinus and the Cabbala. John Nichols of Jesus was giving us our first history of precious stones. Ray was laying the foundations of English natural history. Isaac Barrow was deep in chemistry and anatomy. Hill, the Master of Trinity, was indifferent to everything but politics. Among the few men who had any pretension to elegant scholarship was Duport, then Margaret Professor of Divinity, and shortly afterwards Professor of Greek. He was an excellent Latinist, as his epigrams still testify, and he was one of the few English scholars who had acquired fluency and even some skill in Greek verse composition. His versions of the Book of Proverbs, of Ecclesiastes, of the Song of Solomon, and of the Psalms, are unquestionably the best Greek verses which had as yet appeared in England.

To find anything as good, we must go forward nearly a century and a half to Dr. Cooke's version of Gray's *Elegy*. It does not seem that Dryden had any acquaintance with him, though he was very likely in residence when Duport was made Vice-Master of Trinity in 1655. Dryden had, however, taken his degree in the preceding year, and probably preferred rambling at will through the well-stocked shelves of the College library to attending Duport's lectures on Theophrastus.

His studies were interrupted by the death of his father, and by an attachment he had formed to his cousin Honor Driden, a young lady of great personal attractions and a fair fortune. She turned, it seems, a deaf ear to the flowing periods of her passionate lover, and left him "to bee burnt and martyred in those flames of adoration" which a letter she addressed to him had, he assures her, kindled in him. Whether he returned again to Cambridge, after burying his father, is doubtful. From 1655 to 1657 nothing is known of his movements except what mere conjecture has suggested. In spite of the assertions of Mr. Christie and the old gentleman who assures us that the head of the young poet was too roving to stay there, we are inclined to believe with Malone that, for some time, at least, subsequent to his father's death, he renewed his residence at Trinity. However that may be, it is pretty certain that he had settled in London about the middle of 1657.

Cromwell was then, though harassed with accumulating difficulties, in the zenith of his power, and

Dryden's cousin Sir Gilbert Pickering stood high in the Protector's favour. He sought at once his cousin's patronage, and appears to have been for some time his private secretary; but his bent was towards literature. His prospects were certainly not encouraging, and it would indeed have required more penetration than falls to the lot even of far-sighted judges to discern the future author of *Absalom and Achitophel* and *The Hind and the Panther* in the stout, florid youth, clad in gray Norwich druggot, who now offered himself as a candidate for poetic fame. He was in his twenty-seventh year. At an age when Aristophanes, Catullus, Lucan, Persius, Milton, Tasso, Shelley, and Keats had achieved immortality, he had given no signs of poetic ability; he had proved, on the contrary, that he was ignorant of the very rudiments of his art; that he had still to acquire what all other poets instinctively possess. A few lines to his cousin Honor, which in our day would have scarcely found a place in the columns of a provincial newspaper, an execrable elegy on Lord Hastings' death, and a commendatory poem on his friend Hoddesdon's *Epigrams*, immeasurably inferior to what Pope and Kirke White produced at twelve, conclusively showed that he had no ear for verse, no command of poetic diction, no taste, no tact. We have now to watch the process by which these crude and meagre powers gradually assumed, by dint of study and practice, a maturity, a richness, and a ductility which are the pride and wonder of our literature. We are fortunately enabled

to trace with accuracy not only the successive stages but the successive steps by which the work of Dryden underwent this wondrous transformation—and the history of letters presents few more interesting and instructive studies.

When he entered London he must have found the character of our prose and of our poetry singularly undefined. Both were in a state of transition, and passing rapidly into new forms; but as yet the nature of the transition was obscure, the forms undetermined. There were, in fact, four centres of activity. In Herrick and in the Cavalier School vibrated still the lyric note of Ben Jonson and Fletcher, and in the tragedies of Shirley the large utterance of the old drama was faltering out its last unheeded accents. Cowley and his disciples were upholding the principles of the “metaphysical” school, and their influence was, on the whole, predominant in most of the narrative, religious, and lyrical poetry of the time. In Milton, Wither, and Marvell, in Owen, Baxter, and Howe, it seemed for a moment not unlikely that Puritanism would subdue poetry and prose alike to its own austere genius. But the course of intellectual activity is determined by causes which lie outside itself. Partly in obedience to a great European movement in a scientific direction, and to an anti-Puritan reaction already beginning to display itself, partly owing to the critical and reflective spirit which never fails to follow an age of intense creative energy, and partly no doubt owing to our increasing familiarity with the literature of France, an adherence to the ideals of

Puritanism became impossible, to Elizabethan models intolerable, to metaphysical subtleties repulsive. *Paradise Lost* had still to be written, but it was entirely out of tune with the age, as contemporary testimonies grotesquely illustrate. The *Pilgrim's Progress* was yet to come forth for the delight of millions, but it was not till the present century that it was considered anything but a vulgar romance, appealing only to vulgar readers. In the fourth influence was the principle of life, for it was in harmony with the genius of the age, and it was the influence exercised by Waller, Denham, and Davenant. The terseness, finish, and dainty grace of the first banished for ever the "wood-notes wild" of the early singers, and did much to purify language and thought from the extravagance of the "metaphysical" school, though that school was still popular. The mechanical music, moreover, of Waller's heroics, and the equable but pleasing commonplace of his sentiments, were contributing greatly to bring the tenets of the "correct" school into fashion. Denham laboured also to substitute reflection for imagination, criticism for passion, and fitted the heroic couplet for its new duties. Davenant followed in his footsteps, added body and solidity to the limper harmony of Waller, aimed at brevity and point, wrote confessedly on critical principles, recast the drama, and encouraged his coadjutors to recast it. Cowley, at that time the most eminent poet in England, clung with inexplicable pertinacity to the vagaries of the school of Donne, except in his better moments. But these

better moments sufficed to give him a foremost place among the fathers of the critical school. A rhetorician rather than a poet, without passion, without imagination, but rich in fancy and rich in thought, his style insensibly took its colour from the temper of his genius. Such were the men who initiated the literature which it was the task of the youth now entering on his career to define and establish, of Pope to carry to ultimate perfection, and of Darwin and Hayley to reduce to an absurdity.

In September 1658 Cromwell died, and at the beginning of the following year Dryden published a copy of verses to deplore the event. The *Heroic Stanzas on the Death of the Lord Protector* initiate his poetical career. They are not only greatly superior in point of style to his former productions, but they exhibit a native vigour, an alert and active fancy, and a degree of imitative skill which promised well with time and practice. They showed also that he had attached himself to the new school; and are modelled closely on the style of *Gondibert*, repeating Davenant's peculiarities of turn and cadence with careful fidelity. The death of Cromwell changed the face of affairs, and after nearly eighteen months of anarchy Charles II. was on the throne of his ancestors. Dryden lost no time in attempting to ingratiate himself with the Royalists, and the three poems succeeding the *Heroic Stanzas*, namely, *Astræa Redux*, the *Panegyric on the Coronation*, and the *Epistle To My Lord Chancellor*, were written to welcome Charles II. and to flatter Clarendon. These wearisome productions,

to consider them for a moment apart from their interest as illustrating the development of Dryden's powers, are in one continued strain of stilted falsetto. They have neither truth nor nature. Affecting to be the expression of patriotism and loyalty, they are mere exercises in ingenious rhetoric. Not a note, not a touch indicates that they had any other inspiration than a desire to display eloquence. But they prove how assiduously Dryden had been labouring to make himself what Nature had to all appearance not made him—a poet. They are modelled studiously on the poetry then most in vogue. Their versification, tone, and colour are those of Cowley, Davenant, Waller, and Denham happily blended. From the first he has caught a certain solidity of rhythm, and a happy trick of epigrammatic expression; from the second, a tone of equable smoothness, and the art of perverting imagery into compliment; from the third, a habit of commentative reflection and scientific allusion. Though he had avoided the grotesque extravagance of the Metaphysical Poets, he was not entirely free from their influence, and was careful to enrich and enliven his diction with their varied and wide-ranging imagery. Hence the restless straining after illustration, selected indiscriminately from natural science, from astronomy, from mathematics, from mythology, from history, which is so marked a feature in these and in all his early works.

About this time he had formed the acquaintance of Sir Robert Howard, a fashionable playright of some distinction; and he honoured his friend with some

complimentary verses, which probably form the link between the *Heroic Stanzas* on Cromwell and the three poems of which we have just spoken. Early in 1663 appeared the *Epistle to Dr. Charlton*, the first of his works which, according to Hallam, possesses any considerable merit. Considerable merit it undoubtedly does not possess, but in harmony of versification and in ease and vigour of style it is superior to its predecessors.

Dryden had now served his apprenticeship and become a writer by profession. He had quitted his cousin, quarrelled with his Puritan relations, who were probably not pleased with his apostasy to the Royalists, and attached himself to Herringman, a bookseller in the New Exchange, and at that time the chief publisher of poems and plays. Though the property he had inherited from his father must have preserved him from actual want, it was not sufficient to support him in independence, and he was afterwards taunted with being Herringman's journeyman. However this may be, his admission at this time into the Royal Society—which numbered among its members Boyle, Wallis, Wilkins, Barrow, Wren, Waller, Denham, Cowley, and the Duke of Buckingham—and his intimacy with Sir Robert Howard, place it beyond all doubt that his position was not that which this taunt would imply. He was, perhaps, indebted to Howard for some useful introductions, and, if his enemies are to be believed, for more substantial assistance also. A correspondent in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for February 1745 gives us a

glimpse of the young poet in his lighter hours: "I remember plain John Dryden before he paid his court with success to the great, in one uniform clothing of Norwich drugget. I have ate tarts with him and Madame Reeve at the Mulberry Gardens, where our author advanced to a sword and a Chadreux wig." Mr. Christie is very severe with this tart-eating and Madame Reeve, but there is surely no reason for concluding either that Dryden was a libertine or that the lady was notoriously for many years his mistress. The only definite authority for such a statement is a passage in the *Rehearsal*, and to cite the *Rehearsal* as testimony against Dryden would be as absurd as to appeal to the *Thesmophoriazusæ* and the *Frogs* in support of scandals against Euripides. Whatever may have been the nature of his connection with her, it was probably discontinued on his marriage with the Lady Elizabeth Howard.¹ This lady, the sister of his friend Sir Robert Howard, was the youngest daughter of the Earl of Berkshire, and the marriage, as the register still testifies, took place at St. Swithin's Church, London, on the 1st of December 1663. It has been confidently asserted that Dryden married her under derogatory circumstances, and that previous to her marriage with him she had been the mistress of the Earl of Chesterfield. But of this there is no proof. The two brutal libels in which charges are brought against her good name accuse her husband of being

¹ Mr. Christie dates this tart-eating with Madame Reeve after Dryden's marriage; *hinc illæ lacrymæ*. Sir Walter Scott more liberally dates it before. In either case the witness must have been a child.

a drunken profligate, and are full of that reckless malignity which carries with it its own refutation. Scott long ago pointed out the utter worthlessness of their testimony. Since Scott wrote, a letter addressed by her to Chesterfield has, it is true, been brought to light, and this letter, according to Mitford and Mr. Christie, strongly corroborates the former evidence. We cannot see it. She was the social equal of the Earl, who was acquainted both with her father and with her brothers. She promises to meet him at a place of public resort. She asks him indeed not to believe what the world says of her; but it is surely hard to wrest these words into criminal significance. There is nothing in the letter incompatible either with an innocent flirtation or with a legitimate and honourable attachment. That Chesterfield was a libertine scarcely affects the question. To suppose that a daughter of one of the first noblemen in England should, while still living under her father's roof, submit to be the mistress of a young rake, is preposterous. Mr. Christie supports his authorities with an *a priori* argument that if her character had been unsullied she would never have married Dryden. He forgets that Dryden was himself of good family, that he had her brother to plead for him, that he had all the facilities afforded by a long visit at her father's country house, that he was not in those days the "poet-squab," but that he was "distinguished by the emulous favour of the fair sex." One of his libellers has even gone so far as to say that "blushing virgins had died for him." That the marriage was not a

happy one is only too probable, though the unhappiness arose, it is clear, from causes quite unconnected with infidelity, on the part either of the husband or of the wife. The truth is that the Lady Elizabeth was, like many of the fashionable ladies of that time, almost wholly illiterate, and had no sympathy with her husband's pursuits. She appears also to have been a woman of a morose and irritable temper. She subsequently became insane. It is, however, due to her to say that she was a tender and affectionate mother, as one of her letters, preserved in Dryden's correspondence, very touchingly shows.

About this time Dryden began his connection with the stage, and this connection was, with some interruptions, continued till within a few years of his death, his first play—*The Wild Gallant*—being acted in 1663, his last—*Love Triumphant*—in 1694. Since the closing of the theatres by the Puritans in 1642, the drama, which had been for upwards of a century the glory and the pride of the English people, supported by the throne, the aristocracy, and the great City Guilds, had maintained a precarious and fugitive existence. The successors of the Burbages and Condells, who had once shaken the Globe and the Blackfriars with the plaudits of ecstatic crowds, had been constrained to act for the amusement of a few desperate enthusiasts in a private room at Holland House, or in miserable barns in the suburbs and back streets, dreading the penance of imprisonment and the imposition of enormous fines. Davenant had indeed, by an ingenious compromise, succeeded in

evading the prohibition of the Government. He had in 1656 obtained leave to present at the back part of Rutland House an entertainment—so he called it—of declamation and music, after the manner of the ancients; and *The Siege of Rhodes* and *The History of Sir Francis Drake* still testify the existence of this bastard drama. Four years afterwards the accession of Charles II. rescinded the Ordinance of 1642, and, though the cautious policy of Clarendon only suffered two theatres to be licensed, both managers and playwrights lost no time in indemnifying themselves for their long privations. The King's Theatre was under the direction of Thomas Killigrew, an accomplished and licentious wit, whose sallies were long remembered at Whitehall. The Duke's Theatre was under the direction of Davenant, who, in 1660, had been raised to the Laureateship. The position of a professional writer who had to live by his pen was once more pretty much what it had been when poor Greene jeered at Shakspeare for tagging his verses; and when Shakspeare himself made his fortune out of the Blackfriars Theatre. Dryden must have felt that he had little to fear from the competition of his immediate predecessors. Of the giant race who, to borrow a sentence from Lamb, spoke nearly the same language, and had a set of moral feelings and notions in common, Shirley only remained. But Shirley had collapsed, worn out and penniless, into a suburban pedagogue; Ford had died in 1639; Massinger in 1640; and in such plays as Cokayne's *Obstinate Lady*, Chamberlayne's *Love's Victory*, Killigrew's

Claricilla, and Davenant's tragedies and tragicomedies—which may be cited as typical of the period immediately preceding the Restoration—the drama had degenerated into mere fluent rhetoric.

Into a minute account of Dryden's labours for the stage it is neither profitable nor requisite to enter. Johnson has lamented the necessity of following the progress of his theatrical fame, but sensibly remarks at the same time that the composition and fate of eight-and-twenty dramas include too much of a poetical life to be omitted. They include unhappily the best years of that life; they prevented, as their author pathetically complains, the composition of works better suited to his genius. Had Fortune allowed him to indulge that genius, Lucretius might have found his equal and Juvenal and Lucan their superiors. He had bound himself, however, to the profession of a man of letters; he had taken to literature as a trade, and it was therefore necessary for him to supply, not the commodities of which he happened to have a monopoly, but the commodities of which his customers had need. He followed models for which he has been at no pains to conceal his contempt, and he gratified as a playwright the vitiated taste which as a critic he did his best to correct and purify. Those who live to please must, as he well knew, please to live. The subtlety and refinement of Shakspearean comedy, the conscientious, elaborate, and lofty art of Jonson, were beyond his reach and beyond the taste of his patrons; but the bustle, the machinery, the surprises, the complicated

intrigue of the Spanish stage, spiced with piquant wit, with obscenity alternately latent and rampant, were irresistibly attractive to a profligate Court and to a debased and licentious mob. With all this Dryden hastened to provide them.¹ His first play, *The Wild Gallant*, was a failure—"as poor a thing," writes honest Pepys, "as ever I saw in my life." Comedy, as he soon found, was not his forte, and, though he lived to produce five others by dint of wholesale plagiarism from Molière, Quinault, Corneille, and Plautus, and by laboriously interpolating filth which may challenge comparison with *Philotus* or Fletcher's *Custom of the Country*, two of them were hissed off the stage, one was indifferently received, and the other two are inferior in comic effect, we do not say to the worst of Congreve's but to the worst of Wycherley's. He had, in truth, few of the qualities essential to a comic dramatist. "I know," he says himself in the *Defence of the Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, "I am not so fitted by nature to write comedy. I want that gaiety of humour which is required to it. My conversation is slow and dull, my humour saturnine and reserved. So that those who decry my comedies do me no injury except it be in point of profit; reputation in them is the last thing to which I shall pretend." He had indeed little humour; he had no grace; he had no eye for these subtler improprieties of character and conduct which are the soul of comedy;

¹ "I confess," he says in the *Defence of the Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, "my chief endeavours are to delight the age in which I live. If the humour of this be for low comedy, small accidents, and raillery, I will force my genius to obey it."

what wit he had was coarse and boisterous ; he had no power of inventing ludicrous incidents, he could not manage the light artillery of colloquial raillery. *The Wild Gallant* was succeeded by *The Rival Ladies*, and it is a relief to return to his efforts in serious drama. This play was written about the end of 1663, but, warned by his former failure, he exchanged in the lighter parts plain prose for blank verse, and he wrote the tragic portions in highly elaborated rhyming couplets. In the *Dedication to the Earl of Orrery*, he defended with arguments, which he afterwards expanded in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, the practice of composing tragedies in rhyme. *The Rival Ladies* was well received, and he hastened to assist his friend, Sir Robert Howard, in *The Indian Queen*, which was produced the following year at the King's Theatre with all that splendour of costume and scenery common to the theatre of the Restoration. His powers were now rapidly maturing, and *The Indian Emperor*, his next production, is a masterpiece in ornate and musical rhetoric.

These plays were a great success ; and they were something more. They revealed to Dryden where his real strength lay. They furnished him with the means of disguising his deficiencies as a dramatist, and of displaying these powers in which he had no rival among his contemporaries, and in which he has had no equal since. English rhymed heroic tragedy was practically Dryden's creation. Of their origin and character he has himself given us an interesting account in the essay prefixed to *The Conquest of*

Granada. He there tells us that the germ of them was to be found in Davenant's recast of *The Siege of Rhodes*, and he continues :—

Having done him this justice as my guide, I will do myself so much as to give an account of what I have performed after him. I observed that what was wanting to the perfection of his *Siege of Rhodes* was design and variety of characters. And in the midst of this consideration by mere accident I opened the next book that lay by me, which was an Ariosto in Italian, and the very first two lines of that poem gave me light to all I could desire—

Le donne, i cavalier, l'arme, gli amori,
Le cortesie, l'audaci imprese io canto.

For the very next reflection that I made was this : that an heroic play ought to be an imitation in little of an heroic poem, and consequently that love and valour ought to be subject of it.

Dryden has omitted to notice, perhaps because he thought it sufficiently obvious, that these plays also owed much both to the French dramatists, particularly to Corneille, and to the French heroic romances of D'Urfé, Gomberville, Calprenede, and Madame de Scuderi ; borrowing from the first, not indeed the style and colour, but the pitch and tone of the rhymed dialogue, and from the second the stilted, precious, and bombastic sentiment, as well as innumerable hints in matters of detail. On these foundations Dryden proceeded to raise his fantastic structure. Carefully selecting such material as would be most appropriate for rhetorical treatment, and most remote from truth and life, he drew sometimes on the Heroic Romances, as in *The Maiden Queen*, which is derived from *The Grand Cyrus*, and in *The Conquest of Granada*, which is mainly based on the *Almahide*

of Madame de Scuderi; sometimes on the exotic fictions of Spanish, Portuguese, or Eastern legends, as in *The Indian Emperor* and *Aurengzebe*; or on the misty annals of early Christian martyrology, as in *Tyrannic Love*; or on the dreamland of poets, as in *The State of Innocence*. All is false and unreal. The world in which his characters move is a world of which there is no counterpart in human experience, but which is so incongruous and chaotic that it is simply unintelligible and unimaginable even as fiction. His men and women are men and women only by courtesy. It would be more correct to speak of them as puppets tricked out in fantastic tinsel, the showman, as he jerks them, not taking the trouble to speak through them in falsetto, but merely talking in his natural voice. And in nearly every drama we have the same leading puppets, the one in a male, the other in a female form. The male impersonates either a ranting, blustering tyrant, all fanfarado and bombast, like Almanza and Boabdelin, Maximin and Montezuma, or some sorely-tried and pseudo-chivalrous hero, like Cortez and Aurengzebe; the female some meretricious Dulcinea, who is the object of the male hero's honourable or dishonourable desires. This Dulcinea has usually some rival Dulcinea to vex and bring her out, and the tyrant or *preux chevalier* some rival opponent who serves the same purpose. This enables the poet to pit these characters against each other in declamation and dialogue, and it is these interbandied declamations and dialogues which make up the greater part, or at least the most effective part, of the

dramas. Not that scenic effect is ignored, for battles, processions, feasts, sensational arrests, harryings, murders and attempted murders, invocations of the dead, apparitions, and every variety of agitating surprise, break up and diversify these dialogues and declarations with most admired disorder. But, worthless and absurd as these plays are from a dramatic point of view, as compositions they have often distinguished merit. The charm of their versification, which is seen in its highest perfection in *The Conquest of Granada*, *The Indian Emperor*, *Aurengzebe*, and *The State of Innocence*, is irresistible, being a singular and exquisite combination of dignity and grace, of vigour and sweetness. Dryden is always impressive when he clothes moral reflection in verse, and always brilliant when he presents commonplaces in epigram; and he was careful to enrich these plays with both. Some of the best examples of his ethical eloquence, and many of his best aphorisms, are to be found in them. But perhaps their most remarkable feature is the rhymed argumentative dialogue. Dryden's power of maintaining an argument in verse, of putting, with epigrammatic terseness in sonorous and musical rhythm, the case for and against in the theme proposed, was unrivalled; and he revelled in its exercise. We may select for illustration the dialogue between Almanzor and Almahide in the third act of the first part of *The Conquest of Granada*, that between Cydaria and Cortez in the second act of *The Conquest of Mexico*, that between Indamora and Arimant in the second act of *Aureng-*

zebe, and that in which St. Catharine converts Apollonius from Paganism to Christianity in the second act of *Tyrannic Love*. But if these plays add nothing to Dryden's reputation, it was in their composition that he trained, developed, and matured the powers which enabled him to produce, with a rapidity so wonderful, the masterpieces on which his fame rests.

But to return. The year of the plague closed the theatres, and the following year, not less calamitous to the Londoner, scarcely made the metropolis a desirable abode. Dryden spent the greater part of this long period at Charlton in Wiltshire, the seat of his father-in-law. He employed his retirement in producing two of the longest and perhaps the most carefully finished of all his writings, the *Annus Mirabilis*, and the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. In the *Annus Mirabilis* he returned to the heroic quatrains of Davenant, because he had, he tells us in the preface, "ever judged them more noble and of greater dignity, both for the sound and number, than any other verse in use amongst us." A minute and somewhat tedious account of the four days' battle with the Dutch fleet, an apostrophe to the Royal Society, a description of the fire of London, written with great animation and vigour, the King's services at that crisis, and a prophecy of what the future city would be—form the material of the poem. Both in its merits and in its defects it bears a close resemblance to the *Pharsalia* of Lucan. It is enriched with some fine touches of natural description, and, if the moonlight night at sea and the simile of the bees

were borrowed from Virgil, the pictures of the dying hare, of the baffled falcon, of the herded beasts lying on the dewy grass, and of the moon "blunting its crescent on the edge of day," show that Dryden had the eye of an artist as he wandered about the park at Charlton. The work is disfigured with many "metaphysical" extravagances, but the King's prayer, as well as the concluding stanzas, must rank among the most majestic passages in English rhetorical poetry. Preceded by a *Dedication to the Metropolis*, executed with a laboured dignity of diction and sentiment in which he seldom afterwards indulged, it appeared in 1667. If the poem commemorated the events of a year memorable in history, the year in which it saw the light was not less memorable in literature, for it witnessed the publication of *Paradise Lost* in England and of *Tartuffe* and *Andromaque* in France; and, while it mourned the death of Wither, of Cowley, and of Jeremy Taylor, it welcomed into the world Jonathan Swift and John Arbuthnot.

The *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, which is cast in the form of a dialogue under names representing respectively Lord Buckhurst, Sir Charles Sedley, Sir Robert Howard, and the author himself, is not only an admirable discourse, but it forms an era in the history of literary criticism. The treatises of Wilson, Gascoigne, Sidney, Webbe, Puttenham, Campion, and Daniel; the occasional excursions of Ascham in his *Schoolmaster*, and of Ben Jonson in his *Discoveries*; the dissertation of Hobbes and the incidental remarks of Cowley, Denham, and Davenant, may be said to

represent what had hitherto appeared in England on this important province of literature. But none of these works will bear any comparison with Dryden's. From many of the conclusions, indeed, at which the critics in Dryden's dialogue arrive, modern criticism would undoubtedly dissent, and it may freely be conceded that there is much in it which is superficial and even erroneous. Such would be the remarks on the relative merits of ancient and modern poets, and on the superiority of the later drama to the Elizabethan. But the remarks on the defects and limitations of ancient tragedy, on the necessity for extending the sphere of the drama, and of paying more attention to precision, correctness, and measure than the poets of the preceding age had done, are admirable; the Examen of *The Silent Woman* is an excellent piece of analytical criticism, so also are the portraits of Shakspeare and Ben Jonson. But the best thing in the essay is the defence of rhyme in tragedy, which is a masterpiece of ingenious reasoning.

At what time he left the country is not known, but in 1668 Dryden was again busy with his literary engagements in London. The *Annus Mirabilis* had placed him at the head of the poets of the new school; the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* had placed him at the head of contemporary critics. But, as he was not in a position to prefer fame to independence, he at once betook himself to the drama, and such was his industry that within the year he produced three plays, in one of which, a wretched recast of Shakspeare's *Tempest*, he had the assist-

ance of Davenant. About this time he contracted with the King's Theatre to supply them, in consideration of an annual salary, with three plays a year, and, though he failed to satisfy the terms of the agreement, the company, with a liberality not very common with people of their profession, allowed him his stipulated share of the profits. In 1666 the office of Historiographer-Royal had been vacated by the death of James Howell, who is still remembered as the pleasing author of the *Familiar Letters*, and in 1668 the death of Davenant threw the Laureateship open. To both these offices Dryden succeeded. He was now in comfortable circumstances, but he was soon brought into collision with opponents who embittered his life, and on whom he was destined to confer an unenviable immortality.

Among the young noblemen who varied the amusements of prosecuting vagrant amours, in the guise of quacks, on Tower Hill, and of haranguing mobs naked from the balcony of public-houses in Bow Street, with scribbling libels and hanging about the greenrooms, were George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, and Thomas Wilmot, Earl of Rochester. The Duke either had, or pretended to have, a contempt for the rhymed heroic tragedies which were now in almost exclusive possession of the stage. These heroic plays Buckingham had already resolved to ridicule in a farce in which Davenant was to be the principal character. As Davenant had died, he resolved to substitute Dryden. His Grace's literary abilities were, however, scarcely equal to the task, as the specimens which he

afterwards gave of them in his *Reflections on Absalom and Achitophel* abundantly testify. He therefore sought the assistance of Samuel Butler, Thomas Sprat, and Martin Clifford. Butler, a consummate master of caustic humour, had recently parodied the heroic plays in a dialogue between two cats, and was smarting under the double sting of neglect and envy. Sprat, though a prebendary of Westminster, was a man whose convivial wit was equal to his convivial excesses, and these excesses were proverbial among his friends, and long remembered by the good people about Chertsey. Clifford, a clever man and a respectable scholar, found the Mastership of the Charterhouse not incompatible with habits which he had probably contracted during his lieutenancy in the Earl of Orrery's regiment, and was notorious for his licentious tastes and his powers of scurrilous buffoonery. Between them they produced *The Rehearsal*. In this amusing farce—which furnished Sheridan with the idea and with many of the points of his *Critic*—the central figure is Bayes, a vain and silly playwright; and Bayes is Dryden. With all the licence of the Athenian stage, Dryden's personal peculiarities, his florid complexion, his dress, his snuff-taking, the tone of his voice, his gestures, his "down look," his favourite oaths—"Gad's my Life," "I'fackins," "Gadsooks,"—were faithfully caught and copied. Buckingham, who was unrivalled as a mimic, undertook to train Lacy for the part of Bayes. The mischievous joke succeeded. In a few weeks Bayes, indistinguishable from Dryden, was

making all London merry. Dryden's plots were pulled to pieces, the scenes on which he had prided himself were mercilessly mangled, and he had the mortification of hearing that the very theatre which a few nights before had been ringing with the sonorous couplets of his *Siege of Granada*, was now ringing with laughter at parodies of his favourite passages, as happy as those with which Aristophanes maddened Agathon and Euripides. Dryden made no immediate reply. He calmly admitted that the satire had a great many good strokes, and has more than once alluded to the character of Bayes with easy indifference.

His equanimity, however, seems to have been really disturbed by the success of Elkanah Settle's *Empress of Morocco*, about a year and a half afterwards. This miserable man, who is now known only by the stinging lines in the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, had found a patron in the Earl of Rochester. The Earl had possibly been annoyed at Dryden's intimacy with Sheffield; he may have been impelled merely by whim. But, whatever were his motives, he resolved to do his utmost to oppose the Laureate, with whom he had up to this moment been on good terms. By his efforts *The Empress of Morocco* was acted at Whitehall, the lords at Court and the maids-of-honour supporting the principal characters. It was splendidly printed, adorned with cuts, and inscribed to the Earl of Norwich in a dedication in which Dryden was studiously insulted. London, following fashion, was loud in its praises, and

Dryden, knowing the nature of theatrical fame, was seriously alarmed. Crowne and Shadwell, both leading playwrights, and both at that time his friends, lent him their assistance in a pamphlet which exposed Settle's pretensions in a strain of coarse and brutal abuse. Dryden now felt that he was on his mettle, and applied himself with more scrupulousness to his dramatic productions. In *The State of Innocence*, which has been justly censured as a travesty of *Paradise Lost*, and in *Aurengzebe*, his splendid powers of versification and rhetoric are seen in perfection. In truth, these two plays, amid much bombast, contain some of his finest writing, and possess throughout an ease, a copiousness and uniform magnificence of diction, only occasionally reached before—the result perhaps of a careful study of the principal English poets, to which he had, as he informed Sir George Mackenzie, about this time applied himself. With *Aurengzebe* died the rhymed heroic plays. For Dryden was now weary of his own creation, and in the prologue to this play he announced that he “had another taste of wit,” that he had determined to discard “his long-loved mistress, Rhyme,” and that he should henceforth follow nature and Shakspeare. The reasons for this sudden conversion may, perhaps, be assigned partly to his disgust at the success of Settle's *Empress of Morocco* and of other inferior imitations of his own work, and partly to a sincere conviction of the truth of what he had said about the restrictions placed on a tragic poet who employs rhyme :—

Passion's too fierce to be in fetters bound,
And Nature flies him like enchanted ground.¹

In any case, his conversion was sincere, and again tragedy and tragi-comedy took the ply from his example. As between 1664 and 1677 he had brought the rhymed heroic plays into fashion, so from 1678 he brought, and brought permanently, blank verse into fashion.

In his next play, *All for Love*, he kept his promise, and enrolled himself among the disciples of Shakspeare. But he was careful to show that it was as no servile imitator. Indeed, his design was to improve on his model, and to show how a drama might be constructed which should reflect nature as faithfully as the Shakspearean drama had done without violating the canons of Aristotle. It was an interesting experiment, and he certainly gave it a fair trial. To challenge comparison with Shakspeare he chose as his subject the story of Antony and Cleopatra. And we may fairly concede to him what he claims—that he has made the moral of his play clear; that the fabric of the plot is regular; that the action is “so much one that it is without underplot or episode”; that “every scene conduces to the main design and every act concludes with a turn of it”; that in the matter of the unities of time and place it is irreproachable, and that the style is evidently modelled, and sometimes successfully, on the style of “the divine Shakspeare.” But to compare *All for Love* with *Antony and Cleopatra* would be to compare works

¹ Prologue to *Aurengzebe*.

which, in all that pertains to the essence of poetry and tragedy, differ not in degree merely but in kind. And yet Dryden's tragedy, even from a dramatic point of view, is, with three or four exceptions, superior to anything produced by his contemporaries. If his *Cleopatra* is wretched, his *Antony* is powerfully sketched. The altercation between *Antony* and *Ventidius*, though modelled too closely on that between *Brutus* and *Cassius* in *Julius Cæsar*, is a noble piece of dialectical rhetoric, while the scene between *Cleopatra* and *Octavia* is perhaps finer than anything which the stage had seen since *Massinger*.

Dryden was now at the height of his theatrical fame. His last three plays had been deservedly popular, and, satisfied with their success, he began with his habitual carelessness to relax in his efforts, as *Limberham* and *Troilus and Cressida* sufficiently testify. *Settle* was crushed, but *Rochester* was busy. About this time appeared, circulated in manuscript, the *Essay on Satire*. The nominal author was the Earl of *Mulgrave*, Dryden's friend and patron. The poem contained some coarse and bitter attacks on *Sir Car Scrope*, on *Rochester*, on *Sedley*, and on the two favourite mistresses of the King. It was believed at the time that the real author was Dryden; it was supposed afterwards that the real author was *Mulgrave*, but that the work had been revised by Dryden. *Sir Walter Scott* and *Mr. Christie* can see no trace of Dryden's hand, and are anxious to save him from the discredit of being convicted of playing a double part. We wish we could agree with them. It seems to

us that Dryden's touch is as unmistakably apparent in this essay as the hand of Shakspeare is apparent amid the interpolated rubbish of *Pericles*. Dryden's mannerisms of expression, cadence, rhythm, are so marked that it is never possible for a critical ear to mistake them. They have often been cleverly imitated; they have never been exactly reproduced. It has been alleged that Pope revised the text as it now stands; but Pope, according to the same authority, revised the text of Mulgrave's *Essay on Poetry*, and the hand is not the hand of Pope. It is not perhaps too much to say that Pope, with his style formed and his principles of versification fixed, would have been as incompetent as Mulgrave to catch with such subtle fidelity the characteristics of the elder poet. We very much fear, therefore, that the drubbing which Dryden got in Rose Alley, on the night of the 18th of November 1679, was not undeserved; and, if Rochester took up the quarrel in behalf of the Duchess of Portsmouth, we can only regret that he had not the courage to administer the cudgelling himself. One of his letters, however, makes it probable that he was influenced by the less generous motive of revenging the libel on himself. The Rose Alley ambushade, which might have cost the victim his life, and was certainly a disgrace to all who were concerned in it, appears to have been generally regarded as derogatory only to Dryden, and long continued to furnish matter for facetious ribaldry to party scribblers and coffee-house wits.

Dryden had now arrived at that period in his

career when he was to produce the works which have made his name immortal. From the fall of Clarendon in August 1667 to the death of Shaftesbury in January 1683, England was in a high state of ferment and agitation. The mad joy of 1660 had undergone its natural reaction, and that reaction was intensified by a long series of national calamities and political blunders. There were feuds in the Cabinet and among the people; the established religion was in imminent peril; the Royal House had become a centre of perfidy and disaffection. Clarendon had been made the scapegoat of the disasters which had marked the commencement of the reign—of the miserable squabbles attendant on the Act of Indemnity, of the first Dutch War, of the sale of Dunkirk. But Clarendon was now in exile, and with him was removed one of the very few honourable ministers in the service of the Stuarts. The Triple Alliance was defeated by the scandalous Treaty of Dover, by which an English King bound himself to re-establish the Roman Catholic religion in England, and to join his arms with those of France in support of the house of Bourbon, that he might turn the arms of the foreigner against his own subjects should they attempt to oppose his designs. Between the end of 1667 and the beginning of 1674 the direction of affairs was in the hands of the Cabal, the most unprincipled and profligate Ministry in the annals of English politics. Then followed the administration of Danby. Danby fell partly because no Minister at such a time could hold his own for long, mainly owing to the machina-

tions of Louis XIV., who was to the England of Charles II. what his predecessor Louis XI. had been to the England of Edward IV. From a jarring and turbulent chaos of Cavaliers, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Independents, Country Parties, of colliding interests, of maddened Commons, of a corrupted and corrupting Ministry, of a disaffected Church, of plots and counterplots of a Royal House ostensibly in opposition but secretly in union, two great parties had been gradually defining themselves. In May 1662 the King had married Catharine of Braganza, but he had no issue by her, and as she had now been his wife for seventeen years they were not likely to have issue, and the question of the succession became urgent. In the event of the King having no legitimate children the crown would revert to the Duke of York. But the Duke of York was a Papist, and of all the many prejudices of the English people generally, the prejudice against Papacy was strongest. All now began to centre on this question, and two great factions were formed. The one insisted on the exclusion of the Duke of York from the right of succession on the ground of his religion. These were the Petitioners and Exclusionists, afterwards nicknamed Whigs, and their leader was the Earl of Shaftesbury. The other party, strongest among Churchmen and the aristocracy, were anxious, partly in accordance with the theory of the divine right of kings and the duty of passive obedience, and partly with an eye to their own interests, to please the King by supporting the claim of his brother. These were

the Abhorrers, afterwards nicknamed Tories. The object of the Exclusionists was to inflame the populace against the Papists. For this purpose the infamous fictions of Oates and his accomplices were accepted and promulgated, and the complications which succeeded the fall of Danby took their rise. These were succeeded by a second attempt to exasperate the public mind against the anti-Exclusionists, which found expression in the Meal-tub Plot. Meanwhile Shaftesbury had conceived the idea of securing the succession for Monmouth, the King's son by Lucy Walters. Monmouth was a popular favourite, and was early induced by Shaftesbury to pose as the representative of Protestantism. A wild story was circulated that Charles had made Lucy Walters his wife. Every month added to the popular excitement, and Shaftesbury, at the head of the stormy democracy of the city, was now sanguine of success. All centred on the Exclusion Bill, which on the 11th of November 1680 triumphantly passed the Commons, but was thrown out by the Lords. The country was now on the verge of civil war. Parliament was dissolved in January 1681, and such was the frenzy in London that the next Parliament was summoned to meet at Oxford. It met amid storm and tumult in the following March, but was suddenly dissolved without transacting business.

All this time a savage literary warfare was raging, in which the Whigs had been most conspicuous. The King, the Duke of York, and the Ministry were assailed with a rancour and ferocity never before

displayed by the popular press of this country. The prose libels of Hunt and Ferguson vied with the sermons of Hickeringhill and the rhymes of Settle and Shadwell in damning the Duke and his cause, and in upholding Shaftesbury and Protestantism. The stage, patronised by the King, had ever since the Restoration been true to him. It had upheld monarchy: it had insisted on the divine right of kings, and had zealously set itself to abolish all traces of republicanism. It refused, however, to support the Duke of York, and in *The Spanish Friar* Dryden employed his dramatic ability to cover the Papists with ridicule and odium. In the person of the protagonist Dominic were represented all those characteristics which a year before young Oldham had satirised as typical of the Popish priest; meanness, gluttony, and avarice, set off and darkened by vices still more criminal and loathsome, are careful concessions to popular sentiment, though, as Scott well observes, a sense of artistic propriety led the satirist to endow his hero with the wit and talents necessary to save him from being utterly contemptible. *The Spanish Friar* is beyond question the most skilfully constructed of all Dryden's plays.¹

Dryden's support of the Protestant cause by no means implied apostasy from the Court and the Tories, or any sympathy with the faction of Shaftesbury and Monmouth. He was soon indeed to give abundant proof of this. The fear of civil war, now to all

¹ He was not, however, satisfied with it himself. See his remarks in the *Parallel between Poetry and Painting*.

appearance imminent, brought on a Tory reaction, and the King soon found himself strong enough to strike a decisive blow against the arch enemy of the public peace. In July Shaftesbury was arrested on a charge of "subornation of high treason for conspiring for the death of the King, and the subversion of the Government," and thrown into the Tower to await his trial at the Old Bailey in the following November. At this momentous crisis, just a week before the trial on which so much depended, appeared *Absalom and Achitophel*. Well might Scott observe that "the time of its appearance was chosen with as much art as the poem displays genius." Its popularity was instantaneous and enormous. There were two editions within two months, and seven others followed at no long interval. Nothing approaching to such a hit had been made since the appearance of the first part of *Hudibras*. In one respect this poem stands alone in literature. A party pamphlet dedicated to the hour, it is yet immortal. No poem in our language is so interpenetrated with contemporary allusion, with contemporary portraiture, with contemporary point, yet no poem in our language has been more enjoyed by succeeding generations of readers. Scores of intelligent men who know by heart the characters of Zimri and Achitophel are content to remain in ignorance of the political careers of Buckingham and Shaftesbury. The speech in which Achitophel incites his faltering disciple has been admired and recited by hundreds who have been blind to its historical fidelity and to its subtle personalities. The plan of

the poem is not perhaps original. The idea of casting a satire in the epic mould was derived perhaps from the fourth Satire of Juvenal—though Dryden is serious where Juvenal is mock-heroic. Horace and Lucan undoubtedly supplied him with models for the elaborate portraits, and Lucan's description of the social and political condition of Rome at the time of the great civic conflict is unmistakably Dryden's archetype for his picture of the state of parties in London. Nor was the ingenious device of disguising living persons and current incidents and analogies new to his readers. A Roman Catholic poet, for example, had in 1679 paraphrased the scriptural story of Naboth's vineyard, applying it to the condemnation of Lord Stafford for his supposed complicity in the Popish Plot, while a small prose tract published at Dublin in 1680, entitled *Absalom's Conspiracy; or The Tragedy of Treason*, anticipates in adumbration the very scheme of his work.

Absalom and Achitophel produced, naturally enough, innumerable replies from the Whig party, all of which have deservedly sunk into oblivion. We are certainly not inclined to enter into the comparative merits of *Towser the Second*, *Azaria and Hushai*, and *Absalom Senior*, or to determine the relative proportion of dulness between Henry Care, Samuel Pordage, and Elkanah Settle.

Meanwhile the Bill against Shaftesbury had been presented to the Grand Jury. It was ignored, and Shaftesbury was immediately liberated from the Tower. The joy of the Whigs knew no bounds.

Bonfires blazed from one end of London to the other ; the city rang with boisterous jubilee ; a medal was struck to commemorate the event. The Tories, baffled and mortified, were at their wit's end to know what to do. At this moment the King happening to meet Dryden is said to have suggested to him a satire on the Whig triumph, and to have urged him to direct once more against Shaftesbury those weapons of invective and ridicule which he had already wielded with such signal success. A less fertile genius would have found it difficult to repeat himself in another form, or to add any particulars to a portrait which he had just delineated so carefully ; but Dryden was equal to the task. In *The Medal* he hurled at Shaftesbury and his party a philippic which, for rancorous abuse, for lofty and uncompromising scorn, for coarse, scathing, ruthless denunciation, couched in diction which now swells to the declamatory grandeur of Juvenal and now sinks to the sordid vulgarity of Swift, has no parallel in our literature. The former attack, indeed, was mercy to this new outburst. To find anything approaching to it in severity and skill we must go back to Claudian's savage onslaught on the Achitophel of the fourth century, or forward to Akenside's diatribe against Pulteney. No sooner had *The Medal* appeared than the poets of the Whig party set themselves with reckless temerity to answer it. Shadwell and Settle led the van. Shadwell, who shortly before had been on friendly terms with Dryden, and was now about to make himself a laughing-stock for ever, was a man of

some distinction. He belonged to a good family in Norfolk, had been educated at Cambridge, and after studying at the Middle Temple had given up law and commenced wit and playwright. His conversation, though noted even in those days for its coarseness, was so brilliant that Rochester, no mean judge of such an accomplishment, used to say that, if he had burnt all he wrote, and printed all he spoke, he would have had more wit and humour than any other poet. His habits were dissolute and sensual, and the time he could spare from entertaining tavern companions he divided between muddling himself with opium and writing for the stage. He is known to us chiefly from Dryden's ludicrous caricature, but under that burly and unwieldy exterior—that "tun of man"—there lurked a rich vein of comic humour, keen power of observation, and much real dramatic power both in vivid portraiture and in the presentation of incident. His *Virtuoso* is truly amusing, and his *Epsom Wells* and *Squire of Alsatia* give us very graphic pictures of the social life of those times. Settle's character was beneath contempt, and his works are of a piece with his character; the first was a compound of flighty imbecility and grotesque presumption, the second are a compound of sordid scurrility and soaring nonsense. Of the rest of the replies to *The Medal*, and they were innumerable, Dryden took no notice; but in a piece called *The Medal of John Bayes* Shadwell had exceeded the limits of literary and political controversy, and had descended to some gross libels on Dryden's private

character. This it could scarcely be expected he would forgive, and he proceeded to revenge himself. About 1678 there died one Richard Flecknoe, an industrious scribbler and poetaster, who had been the butt of Marvell's satire, and who, though he had written one exquisite copy of verses and a clever volume of prose sketches, seems to have been regarded as a typical dullard.¹ His character was estimated, perhaps, from his failures as a dramatist, for of the five plays which he had written he could only get one to be acted, and that one was damned. This man is depicted by Dryden as the King of the Realms of Nonsense, conscious of his approaching demise, and anxious for the election of his successor. In a strain of ludicrous panegyric he discusses the grounds of his son Shadwell's right to the vacant throne. He reflects with pride on the exact similarity, in genius, in taste, in temper, which exists between himself and his hopeful boy. His own title to supremacy in dulness and stupidity had never been questioned by any one, but he freely admitted the superior claims of the new monarch. Numbscull and blockhead from his birth, no gleam of wit, no ray of intelligence had ever, as was sometimes the case with his brethren, been discernible in the dunce of dunces. His life, moreover, had been one long war with sense, and what his life had been in the past it would continue to be in the future. Shadwell's coronation is

¹ What can be said for Flecknoe has been said by Southey (*Omniana*, vol. i. p. 105) and by the author of an article in the *Retrospective Review*, vol. v. p. 266.

then described with more humour than is common with Dryden—a humour which, broadening and deepening through old Flecknoe's inimitably ludicrous peroration, attains in the concluding scene a climax which Swift himself might have envied. This admirable satire—to which Pope was indebted for the plot of the *Dunciad*—is certainly to be numbered among Dryden's masterpieces. The raillery, though neither nice nor graceful, is light, and with one or two exceptions free from that offensive coarseness which mars so many of his satirical compositions. Though he lived to learn from young Lockier that it was not the first mock-heroic poem written in heroics, he could assert, without fear of contradiction, that the plot of it was original, and a happier plot never suggested itself to a satirist.

The first part of *Absalom and Achitophel* had been so popular that the publisher was anxious to add a second. Dryden was, however, weary or indifferent, and the work was entrusted to Nahum Tate. Sir Thomas Browne has remarked that Thersites will live as long as Agamemnon, and Bentley observed of himself that, as he despaired of achieving immortality by dint of original effort, he thought his best course would be to climb on the shoulders of his betters. Tate illustrates in a very lively manner the cynical truism of the one and the happy expedient of the other. Nature had endowed that respectable and gentlemanly man with powers scarcely equal to Pomfret's and immeasurably inferior to Blackmore's.

Accident introduced him to Dryden, party-spirit finally conducted him to the Laureateship, and the Laureateship enabled him to inflict on successive generations of his countrymen that detestable version of the Psalms which was so long appended to our Book of Common Prayer. His other writings are buried in the limbo which contains those of his friends Brady and Duke, and those of his successor Eusden. The second part of *Absalom and Achitophel* was carefully revised and corrected by Dryden. Indeed his hand is everywhere traceable, and his additions, we suspect, amounted to more than the memorable two hundred and two lines which were confessedly inserted by him. In these lines he took the opportunity of revenging himself on the meaner actors in the great drama of 1682. After disposing of Ferguson, Forbes, Johnson, Pordage, and others, with that cursory indifference so stinging in its contemptuous brevity—of which Juvenal and Dante were such consummate masters—he proceeds to engage once more with Settle and Shadwell. The verses on the former unite in an equal degree poignant wit with boisterous humour, and are in every way worthy of his great powers. But in dealing with Shadwell he descends too much to the level of Shadwell himself. The portrait of Og has been much admired, but it is marred, powerful though it be, by its excessive and loathsome coarseness; it is as gross in the execution as it is in the design. Bluff, vulgar, and truculent, it savours too much of that kind of vituperation for

which Virgil rebukes Dante for lending an attentive ear—

Che voler ciò udire è basso.

In the *Religio Laici*, which appeared in the same year, he struck a new chord, and produced what Scott justly describes as one of the most admirable poems in our language. From politics to religion was at that time an easy transition, and it would in truth be difficult to determine which raged with more controversial violence. The Romanists, the Episcopalians, and the Dissenters were all powerfully represented, and were all powerfully opposed. The Romanists charged the Dissenters with bigotry and intolerance, and the Dissenters retorted by charging the Romanists with plotting against the Government and with corrupting civil order. Both were, unhappily, right. The Established Church, standing between them, despised the one party and feared the other. Dryden, anxious doubtless to please his patrons, was probably interested chiefly in the political bearing of the question, and the *Religio Laici* was written, he tells us, with a view of moderating party zeal. The position of Dryden in this poem is precisely that of Chillingworth. Both agree that the foundations of faith rest solely on Scripture and universal tradition, and, while both deny the existence of an infallible Church, both insist that the Established Protestant Church is the best of guides and teachers. Both recognise the right of individual reason, regret and reject the Athanasian Creed, and refuse to set limits to the justice and mercy of Omnipotence. Both insist

on the distinction between truths necessary and truths not necessary to salvation, contending that the first are to an open and candid mind few, plain, and clear. In conflicting interpretations of the second both discern the causes of the feuds and schisms which have disturbed the peace of Protestant Christendom, and what Dryden sums up in the lines—

Private reason 'tis more just to curb
Than by disputes the public peace disturb,
For points obscure are of small use to learn,
But common quiet is mankind's concern—

Chillingworth expressed when, in assigning his reason for subscribing to the Thirty-Nine Articles, he wrote, "There is no error which may necessitate or warrant any man to disturb the peace or renounce the Communion of the Church."¹ If in point of style the *Religio Laici* has none of that lightness of touch, and none of that felicitous grace, which throw such a charm over the *Epistles* of Horace, on which it was, he says, modelled, it may, short though it be, challenge comparison with any didactic writing in verse since Lucretius vindicated the tenets of Epicurus. The opening verses of this poem are among the most majestic passages in our poetry.

It is strange and melancholy to find the author of poems so brilliant, so powerful, and so popular, condemned by the meanness of his royal and aristocratic patrons to toil like a hack in a Grub Street garret. Yet so it was. His salary as Poet Laureate was in arrears; his income from the theatres was

¹ Preface to the author of *Charity Maintained*, Works (folio), p. 24.

considerably diminished. The expenses of a handsome house in Gerrard Street, then one of the most fashionable quarters of London, and those incident to the education of three sons, two of whom were destined for the Universities, must have increased his pecuniary embarrassments. His health was impaired, and a visit into the country was, his physicians informed him, not only desirable but necessary. His means, however, were at such a low ebb that without relief it was impossible for him to leave London. He was even in danger of being arrested for debt. "Be pleased to look upon me," he wrote about this time to Rochester, then First Commissioner of the Treasury, "with an eye of compassion. Some small employment would make my position easy"; and he adds bitterly, "'Tis enough for one age to have neglected Mr. Cowley and starved Mr. Waller." It was probably as the result of this application that he was appointed (17th of December 1683) to an office once held by Chaucer, the Collectorship of Customs in the Port of London. He had now to discover, like Johnson, that the booksellers, though hard taskmasters, are the only patrons on whom genius can rely, and he submitted to the drudgery of hack-work with some querulousness and much energy. As early as 1673 he had entertained the design of composing a great national epic, with either King Arthur or the Black Prince for its hero. This was now abandoned, and he betook himself to the humbler but more remunerative occupation of writing prefaces, of executing miscellaneous translations, of providing young dramatists

with prologues, and of co-operating with Lee in producing pieces for the theatres. In 1680 he had taken part in some versions from Ovid's *Epistles*. The work had been successful, and the publisher, Tonson, with whom he had allied himself since 1679, proposed to bring out a volume of *Miscellanies*. To this Dryden contributed some versions of parts of Virgil, Horace, and Theocritus, which the most indulgent critic must pronounce to be not only unworthy of him, but, to speak plainly, disgraceful to him. For the majesty and elaborate diction of the first he has substituted a shambling slipshod vulgarity; the curious felicity of the second has vanished in vapid, slovenly diffuseness; and the pen of Pordage or Settle could not have disguised more effectually the features of the third. The truth was, he sorely needed rest; he was weary, in miserable health, and had saddled himself with a translation of Maimbourgh's *History of the League*. In 1685 appeared another volume of *Miscellanies*, which contained, among other things, some versions from Lucretius. Dryden was now himself again. He had been for a visit into the country, and had recovered from what he describes as a kind of hectic fever. He had been pleased with the success of his Maimbourgh, and a gossiping letter which he wrote about this time to Tonson, thanking him for two melons, gives us an interesting glimpse of him in domestic life. This second volume of *Miscellanies* was probably published on his return to London. The versions from Lucretius, and the paraphrase of the twenty-ninth Ode of the third book of Horace,

are the gems of the collection, and in them his genius once more kindles with all its old fire. The superb invocation which the great Roman poet addresses to the tutelary goddess of his race is rendered with a power and majesty which need fear no comparison with the imperial splendour of the original, and the version from the third book, though not so happy, is vigorous and skilful. He might have left the conclusion of the fourth book where he found it, for, though he humorously assures us in his preface that he was not yet so secure from the passion of love as to dispense with his author's antidote against it, he knew well enough that, whatever might have been the intention of Lucretius, his own was simply to pander to licentiousness. The brilliance and care with which these pieces were executed were due, no doubt, not only to his real sympathy with a poet who in some respects resembled himself, but to the necessity for asserting his superiority over Creech, who had just before clothed Lucretius in an English dress. Fox, it is well known, preferred Dryden's rendering of Horace's Ode to the original. There is, in reality, little or no comparison between them. Assuredly no two poets could be less like each other than Horace and Dryden, and in none of his works is Horace more Horatian, in none of his works is Dryden more Drydenian.

In February 1685 Charles II. died, and Dryden dedicated to the memory of a patron who had given him little but fair words and a few broad pieces, a Pindaric ode, entitled *Threnodia Augustalis*.

This, says Johnson, with a courteous euphemism, is not amongst his happiest productions. It is, in truth, among his very worst. Nothing which Dryden wrote with deliberation in his mature years could be wholly worthless, but it would be difficult to name another of his poems which contains fewer beauties, more prolixity, less merit. It is perhaps the best example to be found in our poetry of what the Greeks called *parenthyrsus*. In celebrating the demise of one sovereign he took care to commemorate the accession of the new. He did not forget that the Hesperus of the setting becomes the Lucifer of the dawn; and in regretting a Numa he dried his tears in an anachronistic vision of an Ancus. *Albion and Albinovanus*, which had been written to celebrate Charles's triumph over the popular party, was now furbished up to celebrate the accession of James, and to welcome the advent of justice and generosity. The character of the new monarch was, however, a mixture of meanness and ingratitude, and his treatment of Dryden was just what might have been expected. He renewed the patent of the offices enjoyed by the poet, who had served him so well, but he struck off a hundred a year from his salary, and would probably have reduced it still further. This, however, Dryden took care to prevent. On the 19th of January 1686 John Evelyn entered in his *Diary*: "Dryden, the famous playwright, and his two sons, and Mrs. Nelly (miss to the late King), are said to go to mass. Such proselytes are no great loss to the Church." With regard to Mrs. Nelly Evelyn had been misinformed—the Church was not

to lose her ; she was to adorn it till her death. With regard to Dryden, his information was correct. The Poet Laureate had indeed publicly embraced the religion which his royal master was bent on establishing, and his salary was at once raised to its full amount.

The sincerity of his conversion under these circumstances to a creed which had hitherto been the butt of his keenest sarcasms has been very naturally called into question. Johnson, with a liberality of feeling rare with him on such points, and Scott, with elaborate argumentative skill, have contended that it was sincere. Macaulay and Mr. Christie arrive at the opposite conclusion. Hallam is of opinion that no candid mind could doubt the absolute sincerity of the author of such an apology as *The Hind and the Panther*. It seems to us that the truth probably lies—where truth usually does lie—midway between the two extremes. Dryden was in all probability induced to take the step by motives of personal interest. He was probably able to satisfy himself of his honesty when he had taken it. Of all the characteristics of his genius its plasticity is perhaps the most remarkable ; of all the resources of his fertile mind none were more abundant than those on which casuists and logicians chiefly draw in convincing themselves and in convincing others. What religious opinions he had, so far as we can gather from his writings previous to the *Religio Laici*, probably differed little from those of a busy man of letters who never seriously reflected on such

matters, but amused himself, as occasion offered, with easy acquiescence in conventional dogmas, with the casual speculations of languid scepticism, or with laughing at both. Most creeds he had treated with contempt, and neither the Protestant nor the Catholic Church had escaped the shafts of his sarcastic wit. But he had now arrived at that period in life when to men of his temper the blessing of a fixed belief is inexpressibly soothing. He was beginning to experience the pain and weariness of a career, the boundaries of which he could now plainly descry ; he was getting old ; his health was failing ; his spirits were depressed ; his literary ambition was realised ; he could scarcely hope to stand higher than he was. The *Religio Laici* is the first indication of his having reflected seriously on religious subjects, and whoever will consider this poem attentively will see that Dryden's conversion to the faith of Rome was just what might have been expected from the position of one who reasoned as he had reasoned there. He had, as we have seen, rejected Roman Catholicism and accepted Protestantism ; but while rejecting the one he had acknowledged that it supplied what every believer in Revelation must desiderate, and while accepting the other he had accepted it at the sacrifice of all hope of a logical faith. As long as he was content to acquiesce loosely in the dogmas and teaching of the Establishment, and to be satisfied with the belief that

The unletter'd Christian who believes in gross
Plods on to heaven, and ne'er is at a loss,

he could remain comfortably a Protestant. But he

ceased to be comfortable when he began seriously to reflect, and if anything is clear in the *Religio Laici* it is that Dryden already felt that there was no middle course between Deism and the creed of Rome, between believing nothing and believing all.

Macaulay argues that if his conversion had been sincere he would not have continued to pander to the profligacy of the age, but would have regarded his former transgressions with horror. Such a view appears to us to be based on a radical misconception of Dryden's character. Unless we are much mistaken, he was—so far as the moral elements of his character were concerned—as purely emotional as Shelley or Edgar Poe; but the peculiarity is hidden by the masculine energy of his rhetoric and his robust good sense. It is difficult to associate the idea of weakness of this kind with one who is the personification in so marked a degree of intellectual vigour. But the moment we look at the man on the moral side we are confronted with extraordinary inconsistencies and contradictions. Like his own Zimri, he had indeed been everything by starts and nothing long. He began with Republican principles; he was soon an uncompromising Tory. In 1658 he was panegyrising Cromwell and his partisans; in 1660 he was hailing Charles II. as the saviour of an erring nation. In 1673 he was doing everything in his power to inflame the prosecution of the Dutch War; ten years later he was cursing Shaftesbury for his share in it. He exhausted compliment in his allusions to Charles II., and was simultaneously assisting Mulgrave in libelling

him. In 1687 he had attached himself to James II.; in 1690 he was speaking respectfully of the Revolution. In 1686 he was pathetically lamenting the profanation of poetry and its debasement to obscene and impious uses; in 1693 he was adding to the filth and prurience of Juvenal. The truth is, he was a poet, with all the sensitive susceptibilities of his race; he was a man of letters, whose proper sphere was the library; but with the temperament of the one and with the accomplishments of the other he combined also the coarser instincts of the mere worldling. Not naturally a man of high spirit or lofty aims, the age in which he lived did little to supply them. He soon ascertained the marketable value of his endowments, and he offered them with little scruple to the highest bidder. Thus, while motives of self-interest determined the direction of his energy, the native genius brought into play soon created genuine enthusiasm, and he at last became what he at first affected to be. He addressed himself to religious controversy as he had addressed himself to politics. When he took the step which has laid him open to so much suspicion, he took it under that pressure on the part of circumstances which had never failed to dictate his actions; but, having taken it, he soon persuaded himself that he was sincere. It is due also to him to say that during the rest of his life, and on his deathbed, where few men are hypocrites, he professed that he felt a satisfaction such as he had never before known, that he converted his children to the same creed, and that he never recanted, though recantation

might have been to his advantage. We may therefore accept his magnificent apology for the Church of Rome as the honest expression of sincere conviction, and not, as his enemies would have us accept it, as the hollow rhetoric and conscious sophistry of an interested apostate.¹

His pen was not suffered to remain idle, and he was at once employed to defend both in prose and verse the religion which he had adopted. From an entry of Tonson's at Stationers' Hall, Dryden had, it seems, intended to translate Varilla's *History of Revolutions in Matters of Religion*, but for some reason, which it is now useless to guess, the work was abandoned, and he proceeded to engage in a controversy which added little to his reputation. Soon after his accession James ordered some papers to be published which had, it was alleged, been discovered in the strong-box of Charles II. They consisted of two documents in the handwriting of the deceased King, asserting that the only true Church was the Church of Rome. To these James added the copy of a paper written by his first wife, Anne Hyde, stating the motives which had induced her to become a convert to the Catholic religion. No sooner had these

¹ In an interesting letter to Mrs. Steward, dated 7th November 1699, he says or implies that recantation would probably restore Court favour, but he could "never go an inch beyond my conscience and my honour. . . . I can neither take the oaths nor forsake my religion, because I know not what Church to go to if I leave the Catholic; they are all so divided among themselves in matters of faith necessary to salvation, and yet all assuming the name of Protestant. May God be pleased to open your eyes, as He has opened mine! Truth is but one; and they who have once heard of it can plead no excuse if they do not embrace it. But these are things too serious for a trifling letter."

manuscripts appeared than their authenticity was called into question by the Protestant divines. Stillingfleet, then Dean of St. Paul's, and one of the most accomplished theologians in England, produced a pamphlet in which he boldly contended that the papers were forgeries. Dryden was selected to reply. He was, however, no match for an adversary who at twenty-four had written the *Irenicum*, and whose whole life had been a long training in theological polemics. Dryden confined himself to the defence of the paper attributed to Anne Hyde, and his vindication betrays a coarse licence of vituperation, a shallowness and ignorance, which Stillingfleet, in a second pamphlet, contented himself with exposing in a few stinging sentences. The Laureate had the good sense to abandon a contest in which he could scarcely hope to retrieve himself, and to resort to a weapon in which he was not likely to find his match. He went down into Northamptonshire, and there, in the old mansion of the Treshams at Rushton—so runs the tradition—produced a poem which, in point of plot, is grotesque in the extreme, but which, in point of execution, must rank among the masterpieces of our literature.

No act had more enraged and perplexed the friends of the constitution in Church and State than the King's recent assumption of the dispensing power, to which he was now about to give practical expression in the Declaration of Indulgence. *The Hind and the Panther* was written with the threefold object of answering the objections of those who disputed the

King's right to suspend the Test Act; of proving that the religion of Christians, if pure and sound, is and can only be the religion of the Church of Rome; and of denouncing and exposing the errors of Protestantism, and especially those of the Sectaries. The Hind—milk-white and immortal—represents the Church of Rome; the Panther—the fairest creature of the spotted kind—represents the Church of England. Surrounded with Socinian foxes, Independent bears, Anabaptist boars, and other animals typifying the innumerable sects into which the Protestant community was subdivided, these fair creatures confer on their common danger, discuss the points on which they differ, comment on current topics, smile, wag their tails, and interchange hospitalities. On this monstrous groundwork Dryden has raised the most splendid superstructure of his genius. "In none of his works," says Macaulay with happy discrimination, "can be found passages more pathetic and magnificent, greater ductility and energy of language, or a more pleasing and various music." There was one circumstance connected with the composition of this work which must have been inexpressibly mortifying to the author, and which still deforms, with an ugly inconsistency, the conduct of its argument. The original policy of James had been to attempt an alliance between the Catholic and the Protestant Churches for the purpose of uniting them against the Dissenters. Dryden had therefore, in the course of his poem, treated the Protestant Church with respect and forbearance and the Dis-

senters with contempt. But the King, finding that such an alliance was impossible, suddenly veered round and adopted a conciliatory tone with the Dissenters, without acquainting his apologist, who was away from London, with the circumstance. The poem was on the point of going to press, and Dryden saw with chagrin the mistake which he had made. He proceeded at once to do all in his power to rectify it. He softened down his praises of the Protestant Church and his sneers at the Dissenters. He introduced two episodes, the fable of the Swallows and the fable of the Doves, in which the clergy of the Church of England are bitterly assailed. Both in the conclusion of the poem and in the preface he exhorts the Dissenters to make common cause with the Catholics against their common enemy the Established Church. Thus altered to meet the new emergency, *The Hind and the Panther* made its appearance in April 1687. It was at once violently assailed, and the poet had to bear the brunt of the odium which the sullen tyranny of his royal master was now beginning to excite on all sides. Whigs and Tories united to attack the apologist of their common enemy. The plot, the argument, the style of the work, were caricatured. The inconsistencies of its author's political career were scoffingly enumerated. One opponent raked up the Elegy on Cromwell, with comments from the *Astræa Redux* and the *Threnodia Augustalis*; another reprinted the *Religio Laici*. Two or three of the more unscrupulous among them charged him with gross profligacy in private life, and descended to per-

sonalities about his domestic troubles, his red face, and his short stature. Most of these productions have sunk below the soundings of antiquarianism: one, however, may still be read with interest, even by those familiar with the refined parodies of Canning and the brothers Smith. This was *The Hind and the Panther Transversed to the Story of the Country Mouse and the City Mouse*, written by two young adventurers, one of whom was destined to become the most distinguished financier in our history, the other one of the most graceful and accomplished of our minor poets — Charles Montagu and Matthew Prior. The old poet had, it seems, treated both Prior and Montagu with great kindness; and he is said to have felt their ingratitude very keenly. He must have recognised the wit of their exquisite satire, and was perhaps not insensible to its justice. A translation of the *Life of St. Xavier*, and a poem on the birth of the young Prince, 10th June 1688, hurriedly but vigorously executed, and incomparably the best of his official poems, concluded his services for James II. Six months afterwards William III. was on the throne.

Dryden's position was now deplorable. He was not only in declining years and in miserable health, but he was deprived of all those Government offices which he had laboured so hard to secure, and on which he relied for permanent income. He was deprived of the Laureateship and Historiographership, and he had the mortification of seeing them conferred on his old enemy Shadwell. His place in the Customs

was taken from him. He had pledged himself too deeply to the religious and political principles which were the abhorrence of the new dynasty and its supporters to dream of preferment. He had nothing but his pen to depend on. An ordinary man would have sunk under the weight of such an accumulation of misfortunes. Dryden grappled with them with all the spirit of youth renewed. Never was the divine energy of genius, the proud loyalty to the conscience of genius, more jealously preserved in spite of sordid temptation to hurried and slovenly work, or more nobly illustrated, than in the ten years still allotted to him. He might engage to provide Tonson with ten thousand verses for a wretched pittance of three hundred guineas; but he took care to make those verses worthy of immortality. He might engage to translate the whole of Virgil for a sum little more than his friend Southerne cleared by two plays; but he strove to make it worthy of the name it bore, "and refused to be hurried."

In 1689 he betook himself once more to the stage, and in less than a year produced a tragedy, *Don Sebastian*, which is justly regarded as his masterpiece, and a comedy, *Amphitryon*, which holds a respectable place even in an age which witnessed the comedies of Wycherley and Congreve. *Don Sebastian* was, he tells us, laboured with great diligence, and of that diligence it bears evident traces. The subordinate characters are more carefully discriminated than was usual with him. Dorax and Sebastian are noble sketches, and Almeyda is not unworthy of her lover.

In depicting the hero friendless, desolate, and ruined, the old poet was not improbably thinking of himself, and when Sebastian cries—

Let Fortune empty all her quiver on me,
I have a soul that like an ample shield
Can take in all, and verge enough for more.
Fate was not mine, nor am I Fate's—

there speaks in trumpet-tones the indomitable energy which made Dryden's last dark years the most glorious epoch in his artistic life. If we except Otway's two tragedies, *Don Sebastian* is beyond comparison the finest tragedy the English stage had seen since Fletcher had passed away. The celebrated scene in the fourth act between Dorax and Sebastian is one of the gems of the English drama. "Had it been the only one Dryden ever wrote," says Scott, "it would have been sufficient to insure his immortality."

He could scarcely expect to get a hearing from the new monarch, but both these plays were anxiously dedicated to men who would be likely to have weight with him, Philip, Earl of Leicester, and Sir William Leveson-Gower. *King Arthur* and *Cleomenes* need not detain us, and with *Love Triumphant* the veteran dramatist took leave of the stage for ever. In the conspicuous failure of his last play he probably read the advent of a new age, and, with that graceful magnanimity which is such a pleasing trait in his character, he resigned the sceptre which he had swayed so long to his friends Southerne and Congreve. He was now busy with his translations of Juvenal and Persius. Of the former he versified the first, third,

sixth, tenth, and sixteenth Satires, entrusting the rest to his sons Charles and Erasmus, to his former coadjutor Tate, and to Creech. The whole of Persius was translated by himself. To this work, brought out in folio in 1693, he prefixed a *Discourse on Satire*, dedicated in an exquisitely courtly strain to the Earl of Dorset. It is somewhat ungracefully garnished with what Scott calls "the sort of learning in fashion among the French"; but it is still valuable for its occasional remarks on points of criticism; for its eloquent protest against the abuse of satire; for its admirable delineation of the Latin satirists; for its interesting autobiographical particulars; and, above all, for the ease, variety, and vigour of the style. The versions themselves have all the air of original compositions. In accordance with those principles of translation laid down by Chapman, Cowley, and Denham, and already illustrated by himself in his versions from Lucretius and Ovid, he has aimed not so much at reproducing the literal meaning as at transfusing the spirit of his authors.¹ He is not therefore to be tried by any canons of exact scholarship. He has indeed spoken contemptuously of the servile fidelity of Barton Holiday. He approaches Juvenal pretty much as Horace approached Archilochus and Alcæus. He confesses himself a disciple, but he spoke not so much what his master dictated as what his master suggested or inspired. He writes, he says, as Juvenal might have written had Juvenal

¹ See his admirable remarks on poetical translation in his Preface to the *Translation of Ovid's Epistles*, and in the Preface to the *Second Miscellany*.

written in English ; and he has not scrupled to boast that he has taught Persius to speak with a purity and precision to which he was in his own language a stranger. In this bold experiment he has, on the whole, succeeded. He has produced translations which may be read with delight by those who cannot read the original, and, if in the versions from Juvenal he who can read the original will miss the trenchant terseness, the happy turns, the splendid elaborate rhetoric of the Roman, he must impartially confess that in the sixth Satire the Englishman has almost made the palm ambiguous. He must admit that the noble verses at the conclusion of the tenth, which are one of the proudest gems in the coronet of Roman literature, have by the genius of Dryden been set as a precious gem in the coronet of our own. With regard to his Persius, scholars will, no doubt, continue to prefer the fascinating perplexities, the tortuous euphuisms, and the harsh enigmatical phrase of Casaubon's favourite to the flowing diction of his English interpreter. It must, however, be allowed that if Dryden has diluted he has not enervated, and that in two memorable passages—the conclusion of the second Satire and the lines to Cornutus in the fifth—he has equalled his original where that original is at its best. To a third and fourth volume of *Miscellanies*, which appeared in 1693 and 1694, he also contributed ; but, with the exception of the fine *Epistle to Kneller*, which, like his *Eleonora*, written a year before, exhibits his style in its highest perfection, none of these contributions added anything

to his reputation. About this time he made the acquaintance of Congreve, who had been introduced to him by Southerne, and who had just written his first comedy, *The Old Bachelor*. This play, revised and adapted by Dryden's experienced hand, had been received with marked approbation ; but a second play, *The Double Dealer*, a far superior work, had been a comparative failure. Upon this Dryden addressed to his young friend that eloquent epistle in which he hails with rapture a disciple who had already outstepped his teacher, and, contrasting his own desolate old age with the glorious promise of his friend's youth, prophesies that fortune will be far more propitious to the scholar than she had ever been to the master.

And oh, defend
Against your judgment your departed friend ;
Let not th' insulting foe my fame pursue,
But shade those laurels which descend to you.

Towards the end of 1693 he commenced his translation of Virgil. It occupied him three years, and though the labour was great, it was lightened during its continuance by the hospitality of the Earl of Exeter, Sir William Bowyer, and his cousin John Driden, and at its termination by the contributions of an old friend, Dr. Knightly Chetwood, and of a recent acquaintance, Addison. Chetwood, who was a respectable poet and an accomplished scholar, furnished him with the *Life of Virgil* and with the *Preface to the Pastorals*; and Addison, then a young man at Oxford, supplied him with the arguments of the several books and with an essay on the *Georgics*.

The work, originally suggested, it is said, by Motteaux, was impatiently expected by the public, who had from its commencement shown a great interest in its progress. It appeared in July 1697, and from that day to this it has maintained a high place among English classics. Marred by coarseness, marred by miserable inequalities, marred by errors of ignorance and errors of inadvertency, it is still a noble achievement. It is a work instinct with genius; but it is instinct not with the placid and majestic genius of the most patient of artists, but with the impetuous energy of the prince of English rhetorical poets. The tender grace, the pathetic cadences, the subtle verbal mechanism of the most exquisite poet of antiquity will be sought, in vain in its vehement and facile diction, in the rushing and somewhat turbid torrent of its narrative. It is indeed one of those works which will never cease to offend the taste and never fail to captivate the attention. The critic will continue to censure, but the world will continue to be delighted; and Dryden, probably, cared little about the applause of the former if he could secure popularity. His really lamentable failures are in tender and pathetic passages—in the episode, for example, of Orpheus and Eurydice, in the whole of the fourth *Æneid*, in the lament of the mother of Euryalus, in the reflections of Æneas on the death of Lausus—in all these his versions are little better than travesties in which we have a deplorable mixture of sounding declamation and frigid commonplace. Nor is he more successful in his renderings of Virgil's many pictures of Nature.

As Wordsworth has remarked, whenever Virgil can be fairly said to have his eye upon his object, Dryden always spoils the passage. Where he succeeds, and eminently succeeds, is in rhetorical passages, in passages which call for pomp, energy, and rapidity. Thus the storm in the first *Georgic*, in the first *Æneid*, the whole or nearly the whole of the second *Æneid*, the description of Etna, the beginning of the sixth book, the battle-pieces and speeches in the later books, and many of the similes, are, on the whole, admirably rendered. He was, as usual, careful to adorn the work with dedications. The *Pastorals* were inscribed to Lord Clifford, the *Georgics* to the Earl of Chesterfield, the *Æneid* to the Marquis of Normanby. The latter dedication is a long discourse on epic poesy, and is one of the most pleasing of his critical essays. To his *Virgil* he added a postscript which it is impossible to read unmoved. "What Virgil wrote in the vigour of his age—in plenty and at ease"—so runs the opening paragraph—"I have undertaken to translate in my declining years, struggling with wants, oppressed by sickness, curbed in my genius, liable to be misconstrued in all I write, and my judges, if they are not very equitable, already prejudiced against me by the lying character which has been given them of my morals." We may, however, temper our pity with the reflection that if the veteran poet had so much to complain of he had much still left to soothe and encourage him. Indeed, we are by no means sure that the undertone of discontent and querulousness which runs through most of his later writings is not

to be referred rather to the nervous irritability of his temperament than to any insensibility either on the part of the public or on the part of his personal friends. He complains bitterly of his poverty, and poor he undoubtedly was; yet he never could have wanted the necessaries of life. He had, on the contrary, we suspect, a full share of its luxuries. He had constant engagements with Tonson; and Tonson, though mean, was honest and punctual in his payments. He had been paid for each one of the *Miscellanies*; he had been paid for *Juvenal*; he had received £500 for his *Eleonora*. The Earl of Dorset had presented him with a large sum, he had a small property of his own, and the Lady Elizabeth was not dowerless. He had cleared at least £1300 by his *Virgil*. He complains of ill-health, but what alleviations two of the most eminent surgeons of the day could afford him he enjoyed in the unfee'd attention of Hobbes and Guibbons. He complains of the malice of his enemies, and yet he might have solaced himself by remembering his friends, for he could number among them some of the most illustrious, the most hospitable, and the most charming of his contemporaries. In that brilliant society which had sat round the Duke of Ormond he had held a conspicuous place,¹ and he had numbered among his intimate associates the elegant and sprightly Sedley, the brilliant Dorset, and the refined and accomplished Sheffield. The country seats of many of the nobility were open to him, and of their hospitality he frequently availed

¹ See Carte's *Life of the Duke of Ormond*, vol. ii. p. 554.

himself. At the house of his cousin John Driden he was always welcome ; and he could gossip with his old love Honor, who, it is said, repented of her early cruelty. At Cotterstock he could be happy in the society of his beautiful relative Mrs. Stewart, who seems to have taken an affectionate interest in his studies, and to have consulted with anxious solicitude his tastes and his comforts. At the pleasant farm of his friend Jones of Ramsden he could indulge in his favourite amusement of angling ; and, when the ill-health under which he latterly laboured compelled him to abandon the fishing-rod, he could still complacently discuss D'Urfey's bad angling, and his own superior powers while the Fates were kind. His manners, we are told, were not genteel, and he has himself observed that his conversation was slow and dull ; but the genial kindliness of his disposition seems to have made him welcome in every circle, and a man more amiable, more humane, and more good-natured than Dryden probably never existed. "He was," says Congreve, "of very easy, I may say of very pleasing access," and we have many pleasant glimpses of him both in his own home in Gerrard Street and in the homes of his friends.

But there was another scene with which Dryden will always be associated, and where we love to picture him. His short stout figure, his florid careworn face, his sleepy eyes, his "down look," his snuffy waistcoat, and his long gray hair, were for many years familiar to the frequenters of Will's Coffee House, in Russell Street, Covent Garden. There his supremacy

had never been shaken. There, whatever had been the vicissitudes of his fortune and whatever may have been his annoyances at home, he could forget them amid loyal and devoted disciples. Round his arm-chair, placed near the fire in winter, and out on the balcony in summer, hung delighted listeners,—gay young Templars, eager to hear the reminiscences of one who could recall roistering suppers with Etherege and Sedley, and Attic evenings with Waller and Cowley and Davenant; who could remember the wit-combats between Charles and Killigrew, and the sallies of Nell Gwynn when she was still mixing strong waters for the gentlemen;—students from Oxford and Cambridge, who had quitted their books to catch a glimpse of the rival of Juvenal;—clever lads about town, ambitious for a pinch from his snuff-box, which was, we are told, equal to a degree in the Academy of Wit;—pleasant humorists, “honest Mr. Swan” the punster, Tom d’Urfey, Browne, and old Sir Roger l’Estrange; young Moyle, “with the learning and judgment above his age,” whose splendid promise was never fulfilled; men distinguished for their skill in art and science, whom his fame had attracted thither, Ratcliffe, Kneller, and poor Closterman. There were those who had like himself achieved high literary distinction, but who were, nevertheless, proud to acknowledge him their teacher, Wycherley, Southerne, Congreve, and Vanbrugh; Thomas Creech, whose edition of Lucretius had placed him in the front rank of English scholars; William Walsh, “the best critic in the nation”; George Stepney, “whose

juvenile poems had made gray authors blush"; young Colley Cibber, flushed with the success of his first comedy; and Samuel Garth, whose admirable mock-heroic poem is even now not forgotten. There, too, were occasionally to be seen those younger men who were to carry on the work he was so soon to lay down, and who were to connect two great ages of English literature. Pope, indeed, was a child of twelve when his young eyes rested for the first and last time on his master; but Prior, now turned of thirty, was already a distinguished wit; Addison, though he had not yet given evidence of the powers which were to place him in the foremost rank of the classics of the eighteenth century, had laid the foundation of future renown; and Swift, though still aspiring to fame as a poet, was about to discover where his real strength lay. *The Battle of the Books* and *The Tale of a Tub* were completed in manuscript while Dryden still presided at Will's.

Dryden's labours were not to end with the translation of Virgil. He had still nearly three years of toil before him. They were years harassed by a painful disease, by malevolent opponents, and by pecuniary difficulties, but they were years rich in the production of the mellowest and most pleasing of his writings. Neither age nor sickness could damp his spirits or dim his genius. His energy seemed the energy of youth renewed. In the autumn of 1697 appeared that immortal ode which Scott, Byron, and Macaulay have pronounced to be the noblest in our language, which Voltaire preferred to the whole of

Pindar, and which even the least indulgent critic must admit to be an unapproached masterpiece in lyrical rhetoric. Then he meditated a translation of the *Iliad*. He wrote a life of Lucian. He revised his *Virgil*, and he was engaged on less important works beside. He contracted with Tonson to supply him with ten thousand verses, and he added upwards of two thousand more. These verses form a volume which has, till within comparatively recent times, been the delight of all classes of readers, and which cast the same spell on our ancestors ninety years ago as the poetic narratives of Scott, Byron, and Moore cast on a later generation. It was published under the title of *Fables, Ancient and Modern, Translated into Verse from Homer, Ovid, Boccaccio, and Chaucer, with Original Poems*, and it appeared in March 1700, a few weeks before Dryden's death. There is much in this volume which can never lose its charm, but modern criticism will discriminate. The versions from Chaucer, consisting of *The Knight's Tale*, *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, the character of the good parson, and *The Flower and the Leaf*, which were once held to constitute the most attractive portion of the work, will probably find least favour with readers in our day. Dryden deals with Chaucer precisely as he had dealt with Virgil. But, if his genius had little affinity with the genius of the poet of the *Georgics* and the *Æneid*, it had unfortunately still less affinity with that of the poet of the *Canterbury Tales*. In translating, or rather in re-writing, a work like the

Æneid, he had many opportunities for the display of his own peculiar talents, and he had been able with some propriety to substitute a masterpiece of rhetoric for a masterpiece of poetry. But this was impossible in the case of Chaucer, and Dryden's failure is deplorable. He preserves literally nothing of what constitutes the charm and power of his original. All Chaucer's *naïveté*, simplicity, freshness, grace, pathos, humour, truth to nature and truth to life, all that attracts us in his temper, tone, and style, have not merely disappeared, but, what is much worse, have been represented by Drydenian equivalents. Where Chaucer is easy and natural with the easiness and naturalness of good breeding, Dryden is coarsely colloquial. Where Chaucer is humorous, Dryden is simply vulgar. It may be doubted whether there is a single touch of nature which Dryden has not missed or spoilt, or a single pathetic passage which he has not made ridiculous. To take two illustrations. Chaucer's magical description of the early morning in May is well known :—

The busy larkë, messenger of daye,
 Saluteth in her song the mornë graye,
 And fiery Phebus riseth up so bright
 That all the orient laugheth of the light,
 And with his streamës dryeth in the greves
 The silver droppës hanging on the leaves.

This becomes in Dryden's hands—

The morning lark, the messenger of day,
 Saluteth in her song the morning gray,
 And soon the sun arose with beams so bright
 That all the horizon laughed to see the joyous sight ;
 He with his tepid rays the rose renews
 And licks the dropping leaves and dries the dews.

Nor do Chaucer's pathos and charm of style fare better. Take the touching and exquisite passage in which the dying Arcite takes leave of Emily:—

Alas the woe, alas the peynes strong
That I for you have suffered and so long !
Alas the death ! alas mine Emeleye !
Alas departing of our companeye !
Alas mine hertës queen ! Alas my wyfe !
Mine hertës lady, ender of my life !
What is this world ? What asken men to have
Now with his love, now in his coldë grave
Alone withouten any companeye ?

This, when translated into Drydenese, becomes—

This I may say, I only grieve to die
Because I lose my charming Emily ;
To die when Heaven had put you in my power !
Fate could not choose a more malicious hour.
What greater curse could envious fortune give,
Than just to die when I began to live !
Vain men ! how vanishing a bliss we crave,
Now warm in love, now withering in the grave !
Never, O never more to see the sun !
Still dark, in a damp vault, and still alone !

But the moment we turn to passages which admit of rhetorical treatment, and which enable Dryden to follow, and to follow with propriety, the bent of his own genius, there he is pre-eminently successful. Such would be the description of the quarrel between Arcite and Palamon, the portraits of Lycurgus and Demetrius, Arcite's prayer, the tournament, and the last speech of Theseus in *The Knight's Tale*, the procession of the fairy chivalry and the dialogue between the heroine and the fairy in *The Flower and the Leaf*, the witch-bride's speech in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*.

Of the versions from Boccaccio—and Boccaccio

supplied him with little more than the framework of the stories—Wordsworth has observed that they are the best, or at least the most poetical, of Dryden's poems.¹ This is unquestionably true. Though they continually strike false notes and shock and jar on us, sometimes by their coarseness, sometimes by their diffuse and too declamatory eloquence, sometimes by their palpable untruthfulness to nature, their total impression is undoubtedly that of powerful poetry. They appeal more directly and effectively to the passions and the imagination than anything else which Dryden has left us, not excepting the best of his lyrics. There are indeed passages in these versions which approach poetry of a high order. The noble lines in *Theodore and Honoria* are well known:—

While listening to the murmuring leaves he stood,
 More than a mile immers'd within the wood,
 At once the wind was laid ; the whispering sound
 Was dumb ; a rising earthquake rock'd the ground.
 With deeper brown the grove was overspread,
 A sudden horror seiz'd his giddy head,
 And his ears tinkled and his colour fled.
 Nature was in alarm ; some danger nigh
 Seem'd threatened though unseen to mortal eye.
 Unus'd to fear he summon'd all his soul
 And stood collected in himself—and whole.

And in another vein how exquisite is the passage describing the sleeping Iphigenia, concluding with the triplet—

The fanning wind upon her bosom blows,
 To meet the fanning wind the bosom rose,
 The fanning wind and purling streams continue her repose.

Among the pieces comprised in the *Fables* is a singularly

¹ Letter to Sir Walter Scott.—Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, chap. xiv.

graceful epistle to the Countess of Ormond, exhorting her to see her own reflection in Chaucer's Emily, and her husband's in the chivalrous and fortunate Palamon. Dryden prefixed to the work, which is dedicated to the Duke of Ormond, one of the most delightful of his critical prefaces, full of pleasant and instructive gossip about Ovid, Homer, Virgil, and Chaucer, about style and language, about the principles of translation, about himself and his opponents, Blackmore, Milbourne, and Collier. On these prefaces he greatly prided himself. They were a form of composition not then familiar in England, and among Dryden's many services to our literature must certainly be added the invention of this most delightful variety of the essay. It had no doubt been originally suggested to him by the French critics and poets, but it had gradually assumed in his hands quite a new character. It had entirely lost the tone and colour of the treatise and disquisition, and had become pure *causerie*. He tells us himself that he had taken Montaigne for his model, that he had learned from him to "ramble," and so to treat his theme as to be never wholly out of it nor in it, and these prefaces certainly bear a very close resemblance in their style and method to the writings of that most fascinating of philosophical gossips. The most charming and valuable of these prefaces are perhaps those prefixed to the *Fables* and to *Troilus and Cressida*, and those which introduce the second and third *Miscellany*, the translation of the *Æneid*, and the translation of Du Fresnoy's *De Arte Graphica*.

There is one passage in the preface to the *Fables* that illustrates very touchingly the effect which years and perhaps sorrows had had in mellowing and purifying the character of the old poet. In 1698 appeared Jeremy Collier's *Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage*. The severest portion of this invective had been directed against Dryden, whose plays had been ransacked to furnish illustrations of what Collier designed to hold up to the execration of his countrymen. To a man in Dryden's position and of Dryden's resources Collier was not a formidable adversary; for he stood alone, he had greatly overstated his case, he had not always been honest in his citations; having little judgment and no humour, he had been guilty of many absurdities which a much less accomplished controversialist than the controversialist whom he had provoked could have turned to excellent account both in defence and attack. Nor was this all. Contemptuous and truculent in his tone—often outrageously so—he had descended to gross personal abuse. It was naturally expected that the great man would reply, and that Collier would fare as Milbourne and Blackmore had recently fared at his hands. Nothing that we know of Dryden is so honourable to him as his conduct on this occasion. He replied, but his reply was not what the world expected, and, considering the provocation received, what meekness itself might have expected.

I shall say the less of Mr. Collier, because in many things he has taxed me justly; and I have pleaded guilty to all

thoughts and expressions of mine which can be truly argued of obscenity, profaneness, or immorality, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance.

With these words, a fitting prelude to the solemn scene which was now close at hand, the old man took his leave of controversy for ever.

“By the mercy of God,” he wrote in this same preface—it is dated February 1700—“I am come within twenty years of fourscore and eight, a cripple in my limbs, but I think myself as vigorous as ever in the faculties of my soul.” On the 13th of the following May he was lying in the Abbey among his illustrious predecessors, of whom he had never during the course of his long life written or perhaps spoken one disloyal word. He died, it appears, somewhat suddenly. Enfeebled by a complication of diseases, he was attacked by erysipelas and gangrene, to which, at three o’clock on the morning of the 1st of May 1700, he succumbed, in spite of the anxious care of one of the most eminent surgeons of that day, his old friend Dr. Hobbes. A not very painful operation might have saved his life; he chose rather to resign it. “He received the notice of his approaching dissolution,” writes one of those who stood round his deathbed, “with sweet submission and entire resignation to the Divine will, and he took so tender and obliging a farewell of his friends as none but himself could have expressed.” His body was embalmed and lay in state for several days in the College of Physicians, and on the 13th of May was

honoured with a public funeral more imposing and magnificent than any which had been conceded to an English poet before. He was laid in the grave of Chaucer, near the bones of Spenser and Jonson and Cowley, not far from his old friend Davenant, and his old schoolmaster Busby, in

the temple where the dead
Are honoured by the nations.

Nothing seems to have distressed Dryden more than the persistency with which his enemies maligned and misrepresented his private character, and it is certainly due to his memory to protest against the injustice of much which has been circulated to his discredit. He has been described in terms which would require some qualification if applied to Oates or Chiffinch. Burnet, smarting from the severe castigation which he had received in *The Hind and the Panther*, represents him as a monster of immodesty and impurity. Macaulay paints him in the blackest colours; an abject spirit, a depraved and polluted imagination, shamelessness, and turpitude of all kinds are imputed to him, not as a writer merely, but as a man. He has been accused of backbiting, of double dealing, and of practising all those mean arts by which the vanity and envy of little men seek to obtain their ends. Nay, charges of a still more odious kind have been advanced and repeated against him. Most of these charges have been grossly exaggerated; for some of them there is absolutely no foundation at all. Those who knew him well, for instance, have distinctly asserted that his private

life was perfectly pure, and yet Mr. Christie continues to accuse him, on the paltry evidence of an obscure libeller, of the grossest libertinism. The simple truth is that Dryden was in private life a very respectable, a very amiable, and a very generous man. "Posterity," says a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for February 1745, who was acquainted with Dryden, "is absolutely mistaken as to that great man; though forced to be a satirist, he was the mildest creature breathing, and the readiest to help the young and deserving." He was, indeed, always going out of his way to do a kindness to his fellow-labourers in literature. He welcomed Wycherley with open arms, though he knew that Wycherley's success must be, to some extent, based on his own depression. Dennis, Shere, Moyle, Motteux, and Walsh were constantly assisted by him. By his patronage Addison, then a diffident lad at Oxford, and Congreve, a timid aspirant for popular favour, came into prominence. When Southerne was smarting under the failure of his comedy, Dryden was near to cheer and condole with him. He helped Prior, and he was but ill rewarded. He did what he could for young Oldham; and when the poor fellow buried in his premature grave abilities which might have added to the riches of our literature, he dedicated a touching elegy to his memory. Lee and Garth were among his disciples; and, if he was at first blind or unjust to Otway's fine genius, he afterwards made ample amends. He gave Nell Gwynn a helping hand at the time when she sorely needed it. His letters to

Mrs. Thomas still testify not only his willingness to oblige, but the courtesy and kindness with which he proffered his services. He was, we are told, beloved by his tenants in Northamptonshire for his liberality as a landlord. The few private letters which have been preserved to us clearly indicate that, if he was not happy with his wife, he was a forbearing and kindly husband, and his devotion to his children is touching in the extreme. He was always thinking of them; he is always alluding to them. He sent two of them to the Universities when he could but ill afford it; and he seems to have helped them in their studies. "If," he writes, referring to his son Charles, who had been ill, "it please God that I must die of over-study, I cannot spend my life better than in preserving his." From those base passions, which are so often the curse of men of letters—envy and jealousy—he was absolutely free. We may not be prepared either to defend or to extenuate the grave offences against morality and decency which sully his writings; we may not be prepared to defend the wild inconsistency of his conduct and his opinions; and yet it is but just to try a poet by the standard of the age which nurtured him. Dryden has been the noble scapegoat of an ignoble and dissolute generation. He fell on evil days and profligate patrons, with the hard alternative of popularity or starvation.

The importance of Dryden from a historical point of view can scarcely be overestimated. Probably no writer ever left so deep an impression on the litera-

ture of his country. For nearly a hundred years the greater part both of our poetry and of our criticism was profoundly affected by his influence. He stood indeed in pretty much the same relation to *belles lettres* as Bacon had stood to philosophy. He was the exponent, if not the initiator, of new ideas, the prophet of a new dispensation. At once summing up and concentrating what had found scattered and somewhat uncertain expression in the earlier representatives of the critical school, he gave it precision, power, vogue, and authority. Neither Waller nor Denham, neither Davenant nor Cowley, singly or collectively, would have been able permanently to affect the course and character of our literature. But Dryden appeared, and an epoch was made. Temper, tone, colour, style—all became changed. A transformed society had found its literary interpreter and teacher—an age not merely unpropitious but inimical to poetry had found its poet. Dryden taught our literature to adapt itself to an altered world. He struck the keynote of the new strains; he marshalled the order of the new procession. Of the poets and men of letters most characteristic of the eighteenth century he was the acknowledged master. He directed them to the classics of ancient Rome and modern France for their models in composition and for their canons of criticism, and both by example and by precept he made those models and canons predominantly influential. It would be no exaggeration to say that if we except *The Rape of the Lock* and *Windsor Forest*, Pope not only followed implicitly

in the footsteps of Dryden, but was indebted to him for the archetypes, or at least the suggestions, of every kind of poetry attempted by him. He once observed that he could select from Dryden's works better specimens of every mode of poetry than any other English writer could supply; and the remark is significant. Indeed, Dryden was to Pope what Homer and Apollonius, Theocritus and Nicander, were to Virgil. On criticism his influence was almost equally extensive. Till the appearance of the subtler and more philosophical disquisitions of Hurd, Kames, and Harris, he contributed more than any single writer to give the ply and the tone to the criticism of the eighteenth century, to prescribe its limits, to determine its scope, not so much directly by virtue of his own authority as a legislator, as indirectly by introducing, interpreting, and popularising the critics of antiquity and of modern France. Johnson has observed, and observed with reference to Dryden, that a writer who obtains his full purpose loses himself in his own lustre. It is certainly doing Dryden no more than justice to say that Addison and the periodical writers in their capacity as critics, that Pope in his prefaces and dissertations, that Goldsmith in his critical papers, and that Johnson himself in his great work are satellites in the system of which he was the original and central luminary. Of modern English prose, of the prose, that is to say, which exchanged the old synthetic and rhetorical scheme of structure and colour for that happier temper of ease and dignity, of grace and variety, familiar to us in the style of such

writers as Addison, Bolingbroke, and Chesterfield, he was the first to furnish a perfect model.

The judgment of our forefathers which assigned to Dryden the third or fourth place among English poets will not be corroborated by modern criticism. It would, indeed, be easy to frame, and to frame with unexceptionable correctness, a definition of poetry which should exclude, or nearly exclude, him from the right to be numbered among poets at all. Of imagination in the sensuous acceptation of the term he had little, in the higher acceptation of the term nothing. And if his genius is, to borrow an expression from Plato, without the power of the wing, it is almost equally deficient in most of those other qualities which constitute the essential distinction between poetry and rhetoric. It was neither finely touched nor finely tempered. It had little sense of the beautiful, of the pathetic, of the sublime, though it could juggle with their counterfeits. To say with Wordsworth that there is not a single image from Nature to be found in the whole body of his poetry would be to say what is not true; but it is true that such images are rare. The predominating power in Dryden was a robust, vigorous, and logical intellect, intensely active and extraordinarily versatile. In addition to this he possessed, or, to speak more properly, acquired, a singularly fine ear for the rhythm of verse, and a plastic mastery over our language, such as few even of the Classics of our poetry have attained. What these powers could effect they effected to the full. They placed him in the front rank of rhetorical poets.

They enabled him to rival Lucretius in didactic poetry, Lucan in epic, and Juvenal in satire. If they could not supply what Nature had denied him, they supplied its semblance. There is in Dryden's poetry, and especially in his lyrical poetry, a vehemence and energy, a rapidity of movement and a fertility and vividness of imagery, which it is sometimes difficult to distinguish from the expression of that emotional and spiritual exaltation which constitutes genuine enthusiasm. But genuine enthusiasm is not there. *Alexander's Feast* is a consummate example both of metrical skill and of what a combination of all the qualities which enter into the composition of rhetorical masterpieces can effect. But it is nothing more. The moment we compare it, say, with Pindar's first Pythian Ode, its relation to true poetry becomes at once apparent. It is the same when he attempts the pathetic and when he attempts the sublime. For the first he substitutes—as in the Elegy on Oldham, the Ode on Mrs. Anne Killigrew, *Eleonora*, and the lines on Ossory in *Absalom and Achitophel*—elaborate eloquence; for the second, if he does not collapse in bombast, magnificence and pomp.

But when all deductions are made, how much must the most scrupulous criticism still leave to Dryden. As long as our literature endures, his genial energy, his happy unstinted talent, his incomparable power of style, can never fail to fascinate. It may be said with simple truth that what is best in his work is in our language the best of its kind. His only rival in satire is Pope; but the satires of

Pope stand in the same relation to *Absalom and Achitophel*, *The Medal*, and *MacFlecknoe*, as the *Æneid* stands to the *Iliad*. Some of the most eminent of our poets have essayed to make rhymed verse the vehicle for argumentative discussion; but what have we which can for a moment be placed beside the *Religio Laici* and *The Hind and the Panther*? His *Epistles* again, the *Epistles*, for example, to Roscommon, to Congreve, to his cousin, to Kneller, to the Duchess of Ormond, are the perfection of this species of composition. His *Prologues* and *Epilogues* are models of what such pieces should be. If his lyrics have not the finer qualities of poetry, and jar on us now with the note of falsetto and now with the note of vulgarity, the first *Ode on Saint Cecilia's Day*, *Alexander's Feast*, the *Ode on Mrs. Anne Killigrew*, and the Horatian Paraphrase are superb achievements. No one, indeed, can contemplate without wonder the manifold energy of that vigorous and plastic genius, which added to our literature so much which is excellent and so much which is admirable, and which elicited from one of the most fastidious of poets and critics the rapturous exhortation—to read Dryden—“and be blind to all his faults!”

THE PREDECESSORS OF SHAKSPEARE¹

THIS volume has more than one important claim to serious consideration. It is the first instalment of what promises to be the most voluminous history of our national drama which has yet been attempted. As a composition and as a contribution to literary criticism it appears to us, and we have little doubt that it will appear to posterity, to illustrate—and to illustrate comprehensively—a most curious phase in the development of modern prose literature. Its author has been long known to the world as an accomplished and industrious man of letters, and in undertaking the present work he would seem to have undertaken a work for which he was peculiarly well qualified. It has been, he tells us, for many years in his thoughts. It was commenced nearly a quarter of a century ago ; and though its composition has been suspended, it has, if we may judge from Mr. Symonds' principal publications, been suspended for studies which must assuredly have formed an excellent training for the task which he now resumes. Nor is this

¹ *Shakspeare's Predecessors in the English Drama.* By John Addington Symonds. London, 1884.

all. We have no wish to speak disparagingly of the historians of English literature, but it must, we fear, be admitted that they have as a class been deficient in that wide and liberal culture—that scholarly familiarity with the classics of other ages and of other tongues—which constitutes the chief difference between literary historians of the first and literary historians of the second order. It is this which has given us many Shaws but few Hallams—much that will satisfy those who seek to be informed, little that will satisfy those who seek to be enlightened; and it is this which places the histories of English literature now current among us so immeasurably below the work of M. Taine. But assuredly no deficiency on the score of literary attainments and literary culture can be imputed to Mr. Symonds. His essays on the Greek poets are a sufficient proof of his acquirements as a scholar. His *Study of Dante* is a historical and critical disquisition of great merit, and his five stout volumes on the Renaissance in Italy display an acquaintance with the literature and history of that period such as probably no other Englishman since Roscoe has possessed. With the poetry and criticism of Germany and France he appears to be equally conversant. He has sought fame as a poet, as a translator, as a critic of the fine arts; and in each of these characters he has distinguished himself. The appearance, therefore, of such a work as the present, by so eminent and so accomplished a writer, cannot but be regarded as an event of importance. On writers like Mr. Symonds depends the ordinary

standard of literary achievement. What they do has the force of example; what they neglect to do is drawn into precedent. The quality of the work produced by them determinates the quality of the work produced by many others. A bad book is its own antidote; a superlatively good book appeals to few; but a book which is not too defective to be called excellent, and not too excellent to become popular, exercises an influence on literary activity the importance of which it is scarcely possible to overestimate. And of such a character is the volume before us.

We have explained our reasons for attaching particular importance to it, and we shall we hope be forgiven for commenting freely on what appear to us to be its chief blemishes. It is our duty to say, then, that there is much in this volume which will, we fear, be of ill precedent in the future. What we expected, and what we felt we had a right to expect, in so ambitious a work, were some indications of the *meditatio et labor in posterum valescentes*, something that smacked, as the ancient critics would put it, of the file and the lamp. What we found was, we regret to say, every indication of precipitous haste, a style which where it differs from the style of extemporary journalism differs for the worse—florid, yet commonplace; full of impurities; inordinately, nay, incredibly diffuse and pleonastic; a narrative clogged with endless repetitions, without symmetry, without proportion. To go no further than the opening chapter, Mr. Symonds there observes that Elizabethan art culminated in Shakspeare. Such a remark was assuredly

neither very new nor very profound, but it is repeated no less than eight times in almost as many pages. First it appears simply as, "In Shakspeare the art of sixteenth-century England was completed and accomplished." Then it reappears as, "In Shakspeare we have the culmination of dramatic art in England." Next it assumes the form of, "Shakspeare represents the dramatic art in its fulness." Again it presents itself as, "Shakspeare forms a focus for all the rays of dramatic light which had emerged before his time." On the next page, "Shakspeare is the keystone of the arch." A few lines afterwards, "Shakspeare's greatness consists in bringing the type established by his predecessors to artistic fulness." A few lines before, "It (the drama) reaches that accomplishment in Shakspeare's art which enthral's attention." Then again it starts up as, "Shakspeare realised the previous efforts of the English genius to form a drama, and perfected the type." A not less glaring illustration of the same defect will be found in the chapter on Marlowe: "The leading motive which pervades Marlowe's poetry may be defined as *l'amour de l'impossible*." This is the text, and through twenty-three octavo pages is the remark repeated and illustrated, illustrated and repeated, till the iteration becomes almost maddening. Some portions of the work bear the appearance of having been contributions to periodical literature, which Mr. Symonds has, without revising, and without adapting to the purposes of his history, forced to do service as sections of a continuous narrative. This

is always a dangerous experiment, and it has certainly not succeeded in Mr. Symonds' case. A moment's reflection would, for example, have shown him the impropriety of prefacing his account of Marlowe with a sketch of the history of the drama, when a history of the drama had been the subject of the preceding five hundred and eighty-four pages.

To the same inconsiderate haste are no doubt to be attributed the many inaccuracies of statement which deform the work. It would be impossible to conceive a description more erroneous and distorted than the description which Mr. Symonds gives, in the second chapter, of the world of Elizabeth. What he says of its intellectual characteristics will apply only to the dramatists, and will even then require to be greatly modified. What he says of its social characteristics is true only of one or two phases of its many-sided life. We can hardly suppose that Mr. Symonds is imperfectly versed either in the dramas of Æschylus or in the dramas of Greene. Yet when he tells us that Æschylus has scarcely any moral precepts capable of isolation from the dramatic context, and that Greene's blank verse betrays the manner of the couplet, he certainly surprises us. What is of course true is that *γνῶμαι* are far less frequent in Æschylus than in Euripides, and that in Greene's earlier style the blank verse is, as Mr. Symonds describes, constructed on the model of the couplet; but, for all that, the plays of Æschylus abound in *γνῶμαι*, and Greene's earlier blank verse is not his later and characteristic blank verse, which is by no means constructed on the model of the

couplet. Equally loose and equally untrue is the assertion that Lyly discovered euphuism. We are surprised that a scholar like Mr. Symonds should not have known that it would be as erroneous to ascribe to the author of *Euphues* the discovery of euphuism as it would be to ascribe to the author of *Samson Agonistes* the discovery of the machinery of the classical drama, or to the author of the second book of the *Novum Organum* the discovery of wit. Euphuism is in many of its characteristic features as old as Seneca and Plutarch. Even when fully developed—that is to say, in the form which it assumed in Lyly's romance—it had been long before the world, and had Mr. Symonds taken the trouble to glance at the books most in vogue when *Euphues* was in course of composition, he would have seen that Lyly, so far from setting, was simply following a fashion. Has Mr. Symonds never inspected North's version of Guevara's *Relox de Principes*, George Pettie's *Petite Palace of Pettie*, and Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*?

Nor is Mr. Symonds always sound in his generalisations on the spirit of the Elizabethan drama. Nothing can be less felicitous than his remark that that drama is draped with "a tragic pall of deep Teutonic meditative melancholy," and nothing can be more unsatisfactory than the evidence adduced by him in support of the remark. It consists of some thirty quotations selected from the speeches of characters who, figuring in tragic scenes, are simply, in obedience to dramatic propriety, expressing themselves in dramatic language.

On Mr. Symonds' principle it would be the easiest thing in the world to prove that the distinguishing feature of the Homeric poems is their cynical pessimism, that the distinguishing feature of Chaucer's poetry is its pensive sentimentalism, and that what chiefly characterises the poetry of Sophocles and Milton is its audacious impiety. What it was incumbent on Mr. Symonds to show was, not that such passages as he refers to occur, but that they occur with obtrusive frequency. True it is that there is an undue preponderance of meditative melancholy in the dramas of Webster, Marston, Tourneur, and Ford, but this school was only one out of many, it is confessedly not a representative school, and its productions form but a small portion of the literature on which Mr. Symonds is generalising. For every play which would give some colour to his remark, there are fifty to which it would not be applicable. The truth is that there is no drama in the world in which the mixture of the serious and humorous is so happily tempered, and which reflects so faithfully the normal conditions of normal humanity.

But these are trifles. We have now to animadvert on blemishes in Mr. Symonds' work of a much more serious character. Within the last few years there has sprung up a school of writers, the appearance of which at a certain period in the history of every literature seems to be inevitable. The characteristics of this school have been the same in all ages. They have indeed been delineated and ridiculed by successive generations of critics, by Quintilian and Petronius

among the Romans, by Aristotle and Longinus among the Greeks ; Boileau and Voltaire covered them with contempt in France, Cascales and Ignacio de Luzan held them up to the scorn of Spain, and they were the detestation of Alfieri in Italy. These characteristics resolve themselves into morbid peculiarities of style, and into morbid peculiarities of opinion and sentiment. In the writings of purer schools style may be compared to a mirror. In the writings of this school it resembles a kaleidoscope. Its property is not to reflect, but to refract and distort ; not to convey thought in the simplicity of its original conception, but to decompose it into fantastic shapes. With them the art of expression is simply the art of making common ideas assume uncommon forms, or, in other words, the art of simulating originality and eloquence. No senses lend themselves so readily to deception as hearing and sight. The strongest eye, if dazzled, cannot discern ; the nicest ear, if stunned, cannot distinguish. And what glare and tumult are to the eye and ear, that in the hands of these writers is language to the mind. Their diction is all blaze and glitter. It has sometimes the effect of spangles dangled in the sun, and sometimes the effect of flame radiating from burnished metal. Its glancing flash baffles ; its unrelieved glare blinds.

The process by which these effects are produced is easily analysed. In the first place, the phraseology of these writers is selected almost exclusively from the phraseology of poetry. It consists mainly of metaphors. They reason in metaphors, they define in

metaphors, they reflect in metaphors; and the metaphors in which they most delight are such as would, even in the enthusiasm of the dithyramb, be used sparingly. Not less characteristic is their habitual employment of hyperbole. Whatever is said is conveyed in language which reaches the extreme limits of expression. Whatever is described is described in terms which exhaust the resources of rhetoric. Thus they have no energy in reserve; when eloquence is appropriate, it has already palled; when it is necessary to be impressive, the force of impressiveness is spent. They have emphasised till emphasis has ceased to appeal. They have stimulated till stimulants have lost their efficacy. Closely allied with this peculiarity, or, to speak more accurately, one of the many phases assumed by it, is the affectation of novel and striking expressions. It was said of Augustus that he avoided as a rock a word not sanctioned by popular usage. It may be said of these writers that what popular usage sanctions it is their chief aim to shun. Thus their diction teems with outlandish words which are sometimes coined and sometimes revived. Thus every eccentricity of collocation and combination in the repertory of vicious rhetoric is assiduously cultivated by them. They out-Ossian Ossian in the tumid extravagance of their epithets and turns. They out-Pindar Pindar in the vehement audacity of their figures. Now we are glutted with what Petronius calls *melliti verborum globuli*—honied turns, and now we are dazzled with expressions which, to adopt Smith's ingenious mistranslation of a phrase in

Longinus, do not shine like stars, but glare like meteors. Everywhere it is the same—an attempt to produce finer bread than is made of wheat, till, like the slave in Horace, nauseated with sweetmeats we long for loaves.

In former times this style—we are speaking of course of prose—was as a rule confined to oratory and history, where, though ridiculous and absurd, it was not without a certain propriety. In our time it has invaded criticism, where it is simply intolerable. The founder and leader of the school of criticism which has adopted it is Mr. Swinburne. Of Mr. Swinburne's work as a poet this is not the place to speak. We will only say that his superb powers as a lyrist have no more appreciative, no more hearty admirers than ourselves. But, unhappily, Mr. Swinburne is not content to confine himself to the art in which he excels. His critical writings are now almost as voluminous as his poetry; and as a prose-writer and critic we believe him to have been guilty of greater absurdities and to have done more mischief than any writer of equal eminence who has ever lived. With the examples of Goethe and Coleridge before us, it would be impossible to accept without reservation the remark of Plato that those who are most successful in exhibiting the principles of poetry in practice are the least competent to interpret and discuss them—in other words, that the best poets are the worst critics. But assuredly no such reservation is possible in the case of Mr. Swinburne. Of the intellectual qualifications indispensable to a critic he has, with the

exception of a powerful and accurate memory, literally none. His judgment is the sport sometimes of his emotions and sometimes of his imagination ; and what is in men of normal temper the process of reflection, is in him the process of imagination operating on emotion, and of emotion reacting on imagination. A work of art has the same effect on Mr. Swinburne as objects fraught with hateful or delightful associations have on persons of sensitive memories. The mind dwells not on the objects themselves, but on what is accidentally recalled or accidentally suggested by them, and nothing is but what is not. Criticism is with him neither a process of analysis nor a process of interpretation, but a "lyrical cry." Canons and principles, criteria and standards, he has none. His genius and temper as a critic are precisely those of Aristotle's Young Man. What seem to be Mr. Swinburne's convictions are merely his temporary impressions. What he sees in one light in one mood, he sees in another light in another mood. He is, in truth, as inconsistent as he is intemperate, as dogmatic as he is whimsical—the very Zimri of criticism. Indeed, the words in which Dryden paints Buckingham admirably describe him :—

Praising and railing are his usual themes,
And both, to show his judgment, in extremes ;
So over-violent or over-civil,
That every man with him is God or Devil.

He is at once the most ferocious of iconoclasts and the most abject of idolaters. In a writer who has been so fortunate as to become the object of his

capricious homage, he can find nothing to censure ; in a writer who has had the misfortune to become the object of his equally capricious hostility, he can find nothing to praise. The very qualities, for example, which attract him in Fletcher, repel him in Euripides. He overwhelms Byron with ribald abuse for precisely the same qualities which in Victor Hugo elicit from him fulsome eulogy. To exalt Collins, he absurdly depreciates Gray. To degrade Wordsworth, he ridiculously overrates Keats. But it is when dealing with the poets who are the subjects of Mr. Symonds' volume that his opinions become most preposterous. The very name of Marlowe appears to have the power of completely subjugating his reason. He speaks of him in terms which a writer who weighed words would scarcely employ, without qualification, when speaking of the greatest names in all poetry. Indeed, he boldly says that, in his opinion, there are not above two or three poets in the whole compass of literature who can be set above Marlowe ; "and if," he adds, "Marlowe's country should ever bear men worthy to raise a statue or a monument to his memory, he should stand before them with the head and eyes of an Apollo." But what follows is too absurd to transcribe.

But Mr. Swinburne's extravagance is not difficult to account for. Few men who have ever lived have been so prodigally endowed with the gifts which ensure pre-eminence in lyrical poetry. With the most exquisite sensibility to emotional impression, with vehement enthusiasm, with the finest æsthetic

perception of the charm and power of the noble and the beautiful wherever they find expression in art and life, in absolute spontaneity of rapt musical utterance, he has no rival among poets since Shelley ; in mere command over words, over all the resources of rhymed and rhythmic expression, no superior, perhaps no equal, in modern literature. But these are not the gifts, this is not the genius and temper, which qualify men to become critics. When, for example, Mr. Swinburne pronounces Marlowe to be "a poet of the first order," and places Wordsworth below Keats, we perceive at once that his critical lens is hopelessly out of focus, that, judging of poetry purely from the æsthetic point of view, or, to speak more correctly, from the point of view of a lyrical poet, he does not understand that what separates poetry of the secondary order from poetry of the highest order is a difference not merely in degree but in kind, that what constitutes the superiority of Sophocles and Shakspeare to Hugo and Webster is not simply what comes under the cognisance of the criticism of emotion. To the soundness or unsoundness of the metaphysic and ethic of poetry Mr. Swinburne, to judge from his estimates and precepts, appears to be quite indifferent. "It does not," he naïvely observes, "detract from the poetic supremacy of Æschylus and of Dante, of Milton and of Shelley, that they should have been pleased to put their art to such use," that is, allied it "with moral or religious passion, with the ethics or the politics of an age"!¹

¹ Essay on Victor Hugo's *L'Année Terrible*.

As Mr. William Rossetti long ago admirably observed, "Mr. Swinburne's mind appears to be very like a *tabula rasa* on moral and religious subjects, so occupied is it with instincts, feelings, perceptions, and a sense of natural or artistic fitness and harmony."¹ He is thus largely responsible for the predominance of the wretched cant now so much in vogue about "art for art's sake," which would have us "understand by poetry"—we quote Mr. Pater's words—"all literary production which attains the power of giving pleasure by its form as distinct from its matter," in other words, for the prostitution on principle of the noblest and divinest of the arts into a mere siren of the senses. The brilliance of his own work as a poet has naturally enabled him to exercise enormous influence on contemporary literature. Even in the judgment of those who can discern he is allowed to stand high among English lyrists. But with the many he is, like Spenser's Una, the object of indiscriminating idolatry. The imitators of what least deserves imitation in his poetry are to be numbered by hundreds, his disciples in criticism are to be numbered by myriads. Turn where we will, to reviews, to critical prefaces, to critical disquisitions and monographs, there, too often, is his note—his turbid intemperance of judgment, his purely sensuous conception of the nature and scope of art; there, too often, his characteristic modes of expression, his hyperbole, his wild and whirling verbiage, his plethora of extravagant and frequently nauseous metaphor.

¹ *Swinburne's Poems and Ballads: A Criticism*, p. 17.

In his critical estimates we are glad to see that Mr. Symonds has not followed his master; but of many of the most offensive characteristics of Mr. Swinburne's style he is, we regret to say, only too faithful an imitator. In some cases he has even gone beyond him. We doubt whether even Mr. Swinburne would have spoken of crudities of composition as "the very parbreak of a youthful poet's indigestion"; or would so far have lost himself in figurative imagery as to describe a drama as "an asp, short, ash-coloured, poison-fanged, blunt-headed, abrupt in movement, hissing and wriggling through the sands of human misery"; or would have represented a dramatist "stabbing the metal plate on which he works, drowning it in *aqua fortis* till it froths"; or would have spoken of "the lust for the impossible being injected like a molten fluid into all Marlowe's eminent dramatic personalities."

There is scarcely a page in Mr. Symonds' work which is not deformed with vices of this kind. The "carnal" element in Marlowe's genius is "a sensuality which lends a grip to Belial on the heartstrings of the lust." Helen's kisses are "kisses hot as 'sops of flaming fire.'" Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* is "that divinest dithyramb in praise of sensual beauty in which the poet moves in a hyperuranian region, from which he contemplates with eyes of equal admiration the species of terrestrial loveliness." Occasionally we have such unmeaning expressions as "the adamantine declamation of Ford," and the "torrid splendour of De Quincey's rhetoric." It may be doubted whether

metaphorical extravagance ever went further than in the following sentence : “ When he sees her corpse ” —Mr. Symonds is describing the famous scene where, in Webster’s *Duchess of Malfi*, Ferdinand is standing over the body of his murdered sister—“ his fancy, set on flame already by the fury of his hatred, becomes a hell, which burns the image of her calm pale forehead on his reeling brain.”

And now our ungrateful task is concluded. We have so much sympathy with Mr. Symonds’ studies, we are so sensible of his distinguished services to history and literature, and we have found so much that is excellent in the present volume, that, had we consulted inclination only, we should have refrained from everything bearing the appearance of adverse criticism. But the duty imposed on us as critics is, we feel, imperative, and that duty would be ill performed if we did not raise our voice against innovations which we believe to be vicious and mischievous. That the style which we have been discussing is a fashion, and will, like other fashions, pass away, we have no doubt. What is to be deeply regretted is that it should have found expression in a work which may possibly outlive many such fashions.

Vitium tanto conspectius in se
Crimen habet quanto major qui peccat habetur.

We have often thought that a curiously interesting book might be written on the posthumous fortune of poets. In the case of prose writers, the verdict of the age which immediately succeeds them is, as a rule,

final. Their reputation is subject to few fluctuations. Once crowned, they are seldom deposed ; once deposed, they are never reinstated. Time and accident may affect their popularity, but the estimate which has been formed by competent critics of their intrinsic worth remains unmodified. How different has been the fate of poets ! Take Chaucer. In 1500 his popularity was at its height. During the latter part of the sixteenth century it began to decline. From that date till the end of William III.'s reign—in spite of the influence which he undoubtedly exercised over Spenser, and in spite of the respectful allusions to him in Sidney, Puttenham, Drayton, and Milton—his fame had become rather a tradition than a reality. In the following age the good-natured tolerance of Dryden was succeeded by the contempt of Addison and the supercilious patronage of Pope. Between 1700 and 1782 nothing seemed more probable than that the writings of the first of England's narrative poets would live chiefly in the memory of antiquarians. In little more than half a century afterwards we find him placed, with Shakspeare and Milton, on the highest pinnacle of poetic renown. Not less remarkable have been the vicissitudes through which the fame of Dante has passed. During the fourteenth century he was regarded with superstitious reverence. Indeed, his reputation was so jealously guarded that a pretext was found to bring a contemporary, who had presumed to parody his verses, to the stake. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries his fame greatly declined, and he sank to a position similar to that

assigned to Ennius by the Augustan critics. During the seventeenth century there were distinguished critics, even among his own countrymen, who not only placed him below Petrarch and Ariosto, but even disputed his title to be called a classic. The sentence passed on him by Voltaire and Bettinelli is well known; and, though he never, it is true, wanted apologists, there can be no doubt that Voltaire and Bettinelli represented the general opinion of the eighteenth century. Then came the reaction. From the time of Monti his influence on the literatures of Italy and England has been prodigious. Every decade has added to his fame, and that fame, gigantic though it is, is even now increasing. Take again Ronsard. Between 1580 and 1609 he was esteemed by many the first poet in France. Between 1609 and 1630 his fame rapidly declined, and between 1630 and 1858 he was so completely ignored that, if we are not mistaken, during the whole of this period no edition of his poems was called for. Suddenly he regained his old glory, and in 1872 a statue was erected to him as "Le Premier Lyrique Français."

Still more singular has been the fortune of the fathers of our drama. It was their lot to obtain from contemporaries what most poets obtain only from a later age—their just deserts. They were, as a rule, neither over-praised nor under-valued. Nothing can be more discriminating than the judgment passed on the dramas of Marlowe, Greene, and Lyly by the generation which witnessed their appearance. But, strange to say, the justice which was so readily done

them by contemporaries was destined to be persistently withheld from them by after ages. It is not surprising that their fame should have been eclipsed by the fame of their successors ; it is still less surprising that the revolution which dethroned their successors should have buried them in oblivion. But that their merits should have been so tardily recognised when, at the beginning of the present century, the tide turned in favour of our earlier dramatists, is inexplicable. Yet so it was. Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Ford, Massinger, Shirley,¹ had found enthusiastic editors when the dramas of the masters of Shakspeare were still uncollected. It was not till 1826 that Marlowe received the honour of being edited. Greene and Peele had to wait still longer. Six of Lyly's plays had, it is true, been reprinted in 1632, but half the present century had passed before a full and adequate edition of his dramas appeared. It was natural that, when the reaction came, it should come with a force proportioned to the persistency with which it had been delayed. It has come with a force which may well astound all who are not acquainted with the characteristics of reactions in criticism. The number of essays and monographs, the object of which is to heap indiscriminate eulogy on these poets, passes calculation. One writer gravely compares Marlowe with Æschylus. Another writer, and we regret to say that that writer is Mr. Symonds, speaks of Greene as a "Titan." We have seen Lyly placed on a level with Molière, and

¹ Though Gifford's edition of Shirley was not published before 1833, it had been prepared before, for Gifford died in 1826.

the author of *The Arraignment of Paris* exalted above the author of the *Aminta*. Indeed, the length to which this fulsome and ridiculous rhodomontade is now being carried is simply sickening. We are not, as we hope to show, in any way insensible to the merits of these poets. We are quite willing to go as far as Lamb and Hazlitt in eulogistic criticism, and in our opinion Lamb and Hazlitt went quite far enough. Every one who knows anything of the world knows that the most mischievous form which detraction can assume is exaggerated praise. Calumny may be repelled or lived down, but the man who is overpraised is continually forced to give the lie to his own reputation. And what is true of men who live in the world is true also of men who live only in the memory of the world. The reputation of Richardson has suffered more from the extravagant panegyrics of Rousseau and Diderot than from the ridicule of Fielding and the sneers of Sterne. One of the noblest passages in the drama of the Restoration is, in consequence of Johnson's absurd encomium, now rarely quoted except to be laughed at; and we quite agree with Blair that Parnell would stand much higher in popular estimation had his merits not been so preposterously overrated by Hume. In the interests, therefore, of these poets themselves, as well as in the interests of criticism, we protest against this fashion of exaggerated panegyric. It cannot fail to operate most perniciously on public taste, and it cannot fail in the end to defeat its own object.

The history of the Early English Drama may be

divided with some precision into three epochs. The first extends from about the end of the eleventh century to about the middle of the fifteenth. This is the period of the Mysteries and Miracles, and its distinctive feature is the predominance of the sacred over the secular element; in other words, the absorption of the Miracle, which was of literary origin, in the Mystery, which was of liturgical origin. Between the middle of Henry VI.'s reign and the beginning of Elizabeth's, this rude drama assumed other forms. In the Moralities, which now superseded the earlier plays, it approached more nearly to the character of a work of art. It became less simple and less uncouth. Under the disguise of allegory it began to exhibit increasing ingenuity in the structure of the fable. Under the disguise of abstractions its *dramatis personæ* grew more and more true to nature and life. Nor was this all. It brought itself into more immediate contact with contemporary society and with contemporary history. If its spirit was didactic, it was not didactic in the sense in which the Mysteries and Miracles were didactic. It was no longer subservient to settled dogma. It emancipated itself from Mediævalism, it allied itself with an awakening world. Nowhere, indeed, is the history of the revolution which transformed the England of Mediævalism into the England of the Renaissance written more legibly than in these plays. In such Moralities, for example, as *The Castle of Perseverance* and *The Interlude of Youth*, the old faith still reigns dominant and unimpaired. In *Lusty Juventus* and in

New Custom the doctrines of the Reformation have triumphed over the doctrines of Catholicism ; and in *The Conflict of Conscience* the struggle between the old faith and the new is depicted with an energy which is almost tragic in its intensity. In *The Nature of the Four Elements* and in *Wit and Science* we have, on the other hand, remarkable illustrations of the emancipation of the Morality from religion. In these pieces the theological element entirely disappears. Their object, so far at least as it is didactic, is simply to awaken a love of science. They reflect the influence of the Renaissance on that side on which the Renaissance was most hostile to the society from which in the first instance the drama had emanated, and to whom for so many generations the drama had been loyal. But if the influence of the new science is perceptible in these plays, the influence of the new learning is not less perceptible in such a Morality as *The Triall of Pleasure*. Here we find that indiscriminate use of materials derived from the classics and material derived from the Bible, that intermixture of paganism and Christianity, which was one of the essential characteristics of the literature of the Renaissance.

The next step in the history of the Morality is the substitution of fictitious or historical personages for abstract figures, and the subordination of the allegorical to the dramatic element—an innovation so simple and so obvious that it is not a little surprising that it should have been accomplished so gradually and delayed so long. It was effected

at last by the Interludes of Heywood, and by the *Kyng John* of Bale. Of these Interludes the three written between 1520 and 1540 by John Heywood, the *Mery Play between Johan Johan the Husbonde, Tyb his Wyfe, and Syr Jhon the Preest*, the *Mery Play between the Pardoner and the Frere, the Curate and Neybour Pratte*, and *The Four P's*, are incomparably the best. Of the last indeed it would be no exaggeration to say that it is a masterpiece of farcical humour. Among the Interludes is to be found a piece which affords perhaps the earliest illustration of the influence of classical comedy on our popular drama. The influence is slight, but it is plain that the Interlude of *Jack Jugler* was rudely modelled on the *Amphitryon* of Plautus. These Interludes became in their turn the model on which Still, some years later, framed his *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, and thus the transition to regular comedy was complete. Not less clearly is the transition from the Morality to the History marked by Bale's *Kyng John*. In this play we find the abstractions of the Morality resolving themselves into historical characters. Thus Sedition becomes Stephen Langton; Private Wealth, Cardinal Pandulph; Usurped Power, Innocent III. It is only a step from *Kyng John* to *The Famous Victories of Henry V.* and *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*, in which abstract characters and didactic allegory entirely disappear, and a historical play, in the proper sense of the term, presents itself.

So closes what may be called the second period in

the history of our national drama. And it is perhaps worth pausing to notice how curiously that history repeated itself, not indeed chronologically, but in all its essential features, in almost every country in Europe. In Italy we have the *Misterio* and the *Miracolo*, the *Favola Morale* and the *Farsa*, a species of drama which answers in one of the forms it assumed to our Interludes; and side by side with these we find the History Play. In France we have the *Mystère* and the *Miracle*, and then we have the *Moralité*, and we see the Morality and the Mystery passing on the one hand into the Farce and the *Sotie*, and on the other hand into the History. In Germany the process is precisely the same—*Mysterien*, *Moralitäten*, *Farcen*, *Sottien*; with this difference only, that the four classes are not so strictly distinguished as they are in France, but continue till about the middle of the fifteenth century to overlie and blend with each other. That Mysteries and Miracles were among the earliest forms which the drama assumed in Spain, and that these were succeeded by Moralities, cannot reasonably be doubted, though no specimens have, we believe, survived. Certainly the *Entremises* correspond exactly to the Interludes.

But, though during this second period the transition from the Mystery to the Morality, from comedy to history, was technically effected, the circumstance is less important than it would at first sight appear to be. It is indeed natural to suppose, as it commonly is supposed, that the drama of Marlowe and Shak-

speare was but a further development of the drama represented by the Mysteries, Miracles, Moralities, and Interludes. Such, however, was not the case. We will not go so far as to say that there are no traces in the Romantic drama of the influence of these earlier and ruder plays, for there are many, particularly in Comedy, occasionally even in Tragedy.¹ But this we will venture to affirm, that had these early plays never existed the Romantic drama would have sprung up independently, would have presented the same features, would have run the same course. In other words, we believe that the Moralities and Interludes stand in the same relation to the Romantic drama as the *Fabulæ Atellanæ* and the Etruscan Mimes stood to the drama of ancient Rome. Roman Tragedy owed nothing to the Atellan Fables. Roman Comedy owed nothing to the Etruscan Mimes. Both were exotics. The one sprang immediately from Greek Tragedy, the other sprang immediately from Greek Comedy. By no process of evolution could the drama as it existed in Rome between B.C. 363 and B.C. 240 have developed into the drama which was in vogue in Rome between B.C. 240 and B.C. 50. By no process of evolution could the drama of Bale and Heywood have developed into the drama of

¹ The Good Angel and the Evil Angel in Marlowe's *Faustus*, and the part played by the Devil in Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, the abstractions of the Dumb Show in *The Warning for Fair Women*, in *Mucedorus*, in *Soliman and Perseda*, and in Yarrington's *Two Lamentable Tragedies in One*, are cases in point. The Shakspearean Clown, undoubtedly a lineal descendant of the Satan of the Mysteries and of the Vice of the Moralities, the employment of the dumb show, the interpolation of strictly realistic transcripts from commonplace life, are more important illustrations.

Marlowe and Peele. To what source, then, is the Romantic drama to be traced? We answer unhesitatingly, to the Italian drama of the Renaissance.

The popularly-accepted theory that Elizabethan Tragedy and Comedy flowed directly from the older plays, that Tragedy is simply the Miracle and Morality modified by the study of Seneca and the Italian tragedians, and that Comedy is simply the Interlude modified by the Comedy of ancient Rome and Renaissant Italy, is in our opinion a theory which could be held by no one who had studied with attention the drama of the Italian Renaissance. As this is a question of some importance, and as our opinion may perhaps appear somewhat paradoxical, we will state our reasons for dissenting from the popular theory.

If what is technically known as the Romantic drama be compared with the older plays, we shall find that it is distinguished from them by three striking peculiarities. In the first place, it is divided into five acts, or, if not so divided, is so constructed as to admit of such a division—in other words, it possesses a regular plot regularly unravelling itself on definite principles. In the second place, imagination and fancy enter largely into its composition; and, in the third place, it is, in its diction, studious of the beauties of poetry and rhetoric. Now these characteristics are, as we need scarcely say, the characteristics of the classical drama. And yet if we compare a page or two of any of our Romantic dramatists with a page or two of a Roman dramatist,

we shall at once feel that the older poet could have had no direct influence on the later. If, for example, we place *Gorboduc*, a play closely modelled on Seneca, side by side with *Tamburlaine* or *Edward II.*, we shall have no difficulty in understanding how wide is the interval which separated Roman Tragedy from ours. Again, take Comedy as formulated by Lyly and Greene and perfected by Shakspeare. It is clearly no mere development of the Interlude. It as clearly owes little or nothing to Plautus and Terence.

We turn to Italy, and all is explained. We there find a drama presenting all the chief features of our Romantic drama—that classicism which is not the classicism of antiquity, that realism which is not the realism of ordinary life. There, we contend, are to be found the models on which Marlowe and his contemporaries consciously or unconsciously worked. It was there that the Romantic drama was virtually promulgated. There, not in England, was accomplished the revolution which transformed the tragedy of Seneca into the tragedy of Marlowe, and the comedy of Plautus and Terence into the comedy of Lyly and Greene.

It is remarkable that from the very first there was a marked tendency on the part of Italian playwrights to romantic innovation. This is seen even in the Latin plays. Among the earliest of them we find comedy blended with tragedy, a constant attempt to escape from the thralldom of the unities, and an ostentatious realism substituted for the ideality of the

classical stage. Their plots, moreover, are frequently drawn from contemporary history, though in this, as we need scarcely say, they found precedents in the tragedy of the ancients. Thus Verardo's *Historia Bætica*, written about 1491,¹ is founded on the expulsion of the Moors from Granada, and is in everything but in diction and structure—for it is written in prose—our Chronicle Play. The words of the Prologue are so remarkable that we will quote them :—

Requirat autem nullus hic Comediæ
Leges ut observentur aut Tragediæ,
Agenda nempe est Historia, non fabula.

In Albertino Mussato's *Eccerinis* and in Laudivio's *De Captivitate Ducis Jacobi*, we have striking illustrations of this romanticising tendency. The first dramatises the career of Eccelino de Romano, and the second dramatises the fall of the famous condottiere Jacopo Piccinino. Both, therefore, are studies from real life, both embody in artistic form familiar incidents. In both the language is the language of Seneca, but the spirit and feeling are the spirit and feeling of contemporaries. And what is apparent in the Latin plays becomes, as we might naturally expect, far more apparent in the vernacular. It is not too much to say that by the middle of the sixteenth century the vernacular classical drama had undergone so many modifications that it presents almost all the characteristics of the Romance. To deal first with style. We find plays written in tercets, in the *ottava rima*, and in *versi sdrucchioli*; we find rhyme and

¹ It was acted in 1492.

blank verse mingled; we find prose and verse mingled; we find blank verse variously modified, monotonously stately, loosely colloquial, broken and spasmodic, fluent and diffuse; we find prose substituted for verse. In the comedies of Angelo Beolco and Andrea Calmo we even find the *dramatis personæ* speaking in the dialects of the cities to which they belong. We see, in fine, a constant attempt to cast off the shackles of rigid classicism.

Another important link between the Italian drama and the Romantic is the fact that it rejected rhyme in favour of blank verse on precisely the same ground. It was employed for the first time in tragedy by Trissino in his *Sofonisba*, represented in 1515; in the following year Rucellai followed Trissino's example in his *Rosmunda*, and after that time it was habitually used. Blank verse, it was said, being less artificial than rhyme, is better adapted to express the passions and to appeal to the passions. "Rima denota," says Antonio Cavallerino, in the Discourse prefixed to his *Rosamunda*, which was published at Modena in 1582, "pensamento, e premeditatione, e che le cose, ch' appaiono pensate, e premeditate, estinto il verisimile, estinguono insieme la compassione, e lo spavento, che nascono ne gli spettatori da quella credenza c' hanno, che le cose accaschino allora in scena." In tone and structure these dramas adhere, it must be admitted, much more closely to Roman models. And yet even in these respects important differences are discernible. As tragedies they have more colour, they have more warmth, they have more life than their prototypes.

If their plots are similar in their evolutions, they are as a rule richer in incident. If, in imitation of a vicious original, the action too often stagnates in arid dialectics, it is as often animated by nature and passion.

Of the obligations of the Romantic stage to the Italian with regard to machinery there can be no question. Every one knows with what effect the Elizabethan playwrights employed the echo; how they delighted in the play within the play; how common it was for a Chorus to explain the action; how frequently the ghosts of great men appeared in the capacity of Prologue; how elaborate the character and how imposing the use made of the dumb show; how important the part played by apparitions, how wide the space filled with physical horrors. All this was undoubtedly learned from Italy. The dumb show had, it is true, been popular in England long before any influence from Italy can be traced on our drama, and the shades of the dead had figured, as we need scarcely say, among the *dramatis personæ* of the ancient stage. But it was reserved for the Italians to discover their full effect as dramatic auxiliaries, and it was as elaborated by Italian ingenuity that they make their appearance in our Romantic drama.¹

¹ See particularly the *Discorso della Poesia Rappresentativa*, by Angelo Ingegneri, printed at Ferrara in 1598. As Ingegneri's remarks about the proper way of representing ghosts are well worth attention, and as the work is not very accessible, we will quote a short passage: "L'ombra dovrebbe esser tutta coperta, più che vestita, di zendale over altra cosa simile, pur di color nero, e non mostrar nè volto, nè mani, nè piedi e sembrare in sommo una cosa informe. . . . E quanto al parlare, aver una voce alta e rimbombante, ma ruvida ed aspra e in conclusione orribile e non naturale, servando quasi sempre un istesso tuono." For the ghost in action see Speroni's *Canace*, Decio's *Aciripanda*, Corraro's *Progne*, and Manfredi's *Semiramide*.

But the influence of the Italian drama on ours is seen most conspicuously in the fact that it furnished examples of almost every species of dramatic composition which obtained among us during the latter half of the sixteenth century. From the Latin plays of Mussato and Laudivio sprang the Latin plays of Legge, Gager, Alabaster, and others. From the Italian imitators of Seneca sprang Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc*, Gascoigne's *Jocasta*, and Hughes' *Misfortunes of Arthur*. Indeed Gascoigne's *Jocasta* is, as Mr. Symonds has for the first time pointed out, a free version of Dolce's *Giocasta*. From such plays as Cammelli's *Pamphila*, Rucellai's *Rosmunda*, and Groto's *Hadriana*, sprang *Tancred and Gismunda* and the numerous plays of which *Tancred and Gismunda* is the type. From the tragedies of Cinthio and Mondella sprang the two famous tragedies of Kyd and the tragedy of *Soliman and Perseda*. From the *Calandra* of Bernardo Divizio, from Machiavelli, from Angelo Beolco, and from the *Cassaria* and the *Suppositi* of Ariosto, Lyly learned to clothe comedy in prose. On the *Boscareccie Favole* was modelled Peele's *Arraignment of Paris*, and on the *Farse* Greene's *Orlando Furioso* and Peele's *Old Wives' Tale*. Luca Contile and the author of *Cecaria* had invented, or rather revived, tragi-comedy. Luca Contile also vindicated it; "la tragicomedia," he says in the Prologue to his *Pescara* (Milan, 1550), "voi sapete, come nel principio ha gli atti suoi tranquilli, nel mezo contiene varie passioni, e diversi accidenti, nel fin bisogna che

si riduca a una comune e salda quiete.” Domestic tragedy dates from the *Soldato* of Angelo Leonico (1550), and what are known in our drama as Histories—plays, that is to say, founded on recent historical incidents—had precedents in Mondella’s *Isifile* and in Fuligni’s *Bragadino*, the first of which appeared in 1582, and the second in 1589.

Nor are these resemblances between the Italian and the English drama likely to have been mere coincidences. Of the intimate connection between England and Italy during the early and latter parts of Elizabeth’s reign, and of the popularity of Italian literature in England during these years, there can be no question. Its study had been facilitated by grammars and dictionaries, by guides to its beauties, and by guides to its pronunciation.¹ As early as 1578 an Italian Company was acting in London.² No man’s education was held to be complete till he had visited the cities which were to an Englishman of that age what Athens and Corinth were to the contemporaries of Horace, and till he had, in the phrase of the time, returned home “Italianated.” That Gascoigne, Greene, Munday, Lodge, and Nash travelled in Italy is certain, and it is very likely that, if more was known of the lives of Peele and Marlowe, we should find that they too had performed the customary pilgrimage. However that may be, they

¹ See, for example, *Principal Rules of the Italian Grammar*, by Wykes, printed in 1560 and reprinted in 1567; *The Italian Grammar and Dictionary*, by W. Thomas, 1560; Lenbulo’s *Italian Grammar*, put into English by Henry Grantham, 1578.

² Collier’s *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, vol. iii. p. 201.

were undoubtedly well read in the literature of Italy. It could hardly, indeed, have been otherwise. The taste was universal. At the Universities and in London an Italian quotation was the symbol of the cultured. Not only do Italian proverbs and distichs abound in the popular drama, but occasionally we find citations of several lines, as in Greene's *Orlando Furioso* and Peele's *Arraignment of Paris*. The classics of modern Italy were indeed as reverently studied as the classics of antiquity. We learn, for example, from Gabriel Harvey's letters that at Cambridge Italian was more in fashion than even Greek and Latin. Those who could not read the originals contented themselves with translations, and the number of translations which appeared between the accession of Elizabeth and the accession of James I. was immense. Ascham tells us that these Italian translations were sold in every shop in London, complaining that Petrarch was preferred to Moses, and that the *Decameron* was more highly estimated than the Bible. That the English playwrights were in the habit of indulging in wholesale plagiarism from their brethren in Italy is proved by Gosson, who tells us that the Italian comedies "were ransacked to furnish matter for the London theatres." It would not perhaps be too much to say that in the case of nearly two-thirds of the Elizabethan dramas, where they are not Comedies or Histories, the plots may be traced to Italian sources. But it was only natural that the power which had revolutionised our literature should revolutionise our drama. Since the publication of

Tottel's *Miscellany* in 1557, English genius had been as completely under the spell of Italy as seventeen centuries before Roman genius had been under the spell of Greece, and as a century afterwards French genius was under the spell of Rome. We have not the smallest doubt that Marlowe and Greene regarded Bale and Heywood as Actius and Terence regarded the authors of the Atellan Farces, and as Racine and Molière regarded Rutebeuf and Bodel.

We must, however, guard carefully against attaching undue importance to the influence of Italy. It was an influence the significance of which is purely historical. All it effected was to furnish the artists of our stage with models, it operated on form, and it operated on composition, but it extended no further. Once formulated, our drama pursued an independent course. It became, in the phrase of its greatest representative, "the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure"—in style and diction of unparalleled richness and variety, in matter co-extensive with human experience and human imagination. To no eye indeed but to the eye of the critical historian would there seem to be anything in common between those living panoramas of nature and manners, the romances of Elizabethan England, and the stately declamations which won the plaudits of the *Academia de' Rozzi* and the *Academia degl' Intronati*.

With the accession of Elizabeth commences what may be called the third period in the history of our stage. More than a quarter of a century had still to elapse before Marlowe and his coadjutors revolutionised

dramatic art. Of the plays produced between 1558 and 1586 probably not more than one-third have escaped the ravages of time. But there is no reason to suppose that those which are lost differed in any important respect from those that remain, and enough remain to enable us to form a clear conception of the state of dramatic literature during these years. Regarded comprehensively, that literature is represented by three distinct schools. On the one side stand a body of playwrights who adhered to the traditions of the vernacular drama, and who reproduced in forms more or less modified the Moralities and Interludes. On the other side stand a large and influential body who treated these rude medleys with disdain, and owed allegiance only to classical masters. Between these two schools stands a third, which united the characteristics—or, to speak more accurately, many of the characteristics—of both. And from the appearance of *Gorboduc* to the appearance of *Tamburlaine* these three schools co-existed, each pursuing an independent course. We have thus the extraordinary anomaly of a drama, crude, rudimentary, semi-barbarous, flourishing contemporaneously with a drama as perfect in form as the most finished pieces of the Roman and Italian stage. It would at first sight appear almost incredible that such plays as *Horestes*, *Tom Tiler and his Wife*, and *Like to Like* should have succeeded such plays as *Ralph Roister Doister* and *Gorboduc*, and that an age which had witnessed *Tancred and Gismunda* could tolerate sixteen years afterwards the *History of Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes*. But

this anomaly is easily explained. The difference between these plays corresponds with the difference between the audiences to which they were addressed. Till the last decade of Elizabeth's reign there were two distinct spheres of dramatic activity. At the Inns of Court, at the Court itself, at the Universities, at the public schools, nothing was tolerated which did not bear the stamp of classicism. It was for such audiences that Rightwise produced in Latin his *Dido*, Alabaster his *Roxana*, and Legge his *Richardus Tertius*; that Sackville and Norton parodied Seneca, Udall Plautus, and Spenser Ariosto and Machiavelli¹; that Gascoigne adapted Dolce's *Giocasta* and Ariosto's *Gli Suppositi*; that Hatton and his coadjutors wrote *Tancred and Gismunda*, Thomas Hughes *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, and Lyly *Alexander and Campaspe* and *Endymion*. Of a very different order were the spectators who gathered in the inn-yards of the Belle Savage and the Red Bull and in the play-houses on the Bankside and in Shoreditch, and of a very different order were the performances in which they delighted. No class is so conservative as the vulgar. The spell of tradition is potent with them long after it has lost its efficacy with others. What found most favour in their eyes was what had found favour in the eyes of their forefathers. They clung

¹ These comedies of Spenser's have unfortunately perished, but their character and our loss are sufficiently indicated in one of Gabriel Harvey's letters to him: "I am voyd of all judgement if your nine Comedies whereunto, in imitation of Herodotus, you give the names of the Nine Muses, come not nearer Ariosto's Comedies, eyther for the fineness of plausible elocation or the rareness of poetical invention, than that Elvish Queene doth to his Orlando Furioso."

fondly to all that was peculiar to the old stage, to the old buffoonery, to the old didacticism, to the old half-farcical, half-serious allegorising, to the old realism, to the Vice, to the abstractions, to the gingling doggerel, to the cumbersome quatrains. In one respect, indeed, these plays differed from those of the former generation. The material out of which preceding playwrights constructed their plots lay within a comparatively narrow compass. The cry now was for novelty. The history and fiction of all ages and all countries were ransacked for matter to weave into dramas. "I may boldly say it, because I have seen it," says Gosson, "that *The Palace of Pleasure*, *The Golden Ass*, *The Æthiopian History*, *Amadis of France*, and *The Round Table*, comedies in Latin, French, Italian, and Spanish, have been thoroughly raked to furnish the playhouses in London."¹ Nothing came amiss to these indefatigable caterers for popular amusement. They drew indiscriminately on pagan mythology and on mediæval legend, on incidents in history and on incidents in private life. Of these dramas probably few found their way into print, and scarcely any have survived.² But the loss, if we may trust the opinion of competent judges, and if those which remain are samples of those which have disappeared, is assuredly no matter for regret. The contempt with which they were regarded by polite critics is shown and justified by what Whetstone, Gosson, and Sidney have written concerning them.

¹ *Plays Confuted in Five Actions*.

² See, for a list of fifty-two of these, Collier's *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, vol. ii. pp. 410, 411.

They appear, indeed, to have been little better than wild and improbable medleys, as coarse and bungling in construction as they were vulgar and cumbersome in style.

But of these early schools the most interesting from a historical point of view is the third. It was the aim of the representatives of this school to create a drama out of elements furnished by each of the other schools. They followed popular models in blending tragedy with comedy, in cultivating a spirit of homely fidelity to nature and life, and in embodying dramatic dialogue in rhymed verse. But classical models guided them in the evolution of their plots, in their anxiety to avoid gross violation of the unities, and in their attempt at dignity and propriety of diction. As samples of the plays of this school we have Richard Edwards' *Damon and Pythias*, and George Whetstone's *Promos and Cassandra*. The latter, which is preceded by a singularly interesting preface, explaining the principle on which it was written, has more than one title to attention. It was the work on which the greatest of poets founded his *Measure for Measure*, and it was the first formal vindication of some of the leading principles of Romanticism. Whetstone regarded with just disdain the rude plays in vogue with the vulgar, but he saw clearly that too strict an adherence to the canons of Classicism was in every way undesirable. He chose, therefore, a middle course. He avoided the extremes of both, but he adopted something from each. His play is written in a medley of styles, he employs

rhyming lines of twelve or fourteen syllables indiscriminately mixed, quatrains, short ballad lines, the heroic couplet, and in two cases stately blank verse; and thus his play marks with preciseness the transition from the old drama to the new. But the preface is of more importance than the play, for he there practically lays down some of the chief canons of the romantic as distinguished from the popular and the classical drama. Speaking of comedy, and presumably of tragi-comedy, he claims that it should be a faithful reflection of nature and life, that it should not, as was the case with the popular drama, violate truth and probability¹; that without turning the stage into a pulpit it should yet have a moral purpose. Nor again should all the characters be cast in the same mould and be made to express themselves in the same style; "grave old men should instruct young men, strumpets should be lascivious, clowns disorderly, intermingling all these actions in such sort as the grave may instruct and the pleasant delight." And it was with the intention of adapting the language to the character that he employed the medley of styles in which his play is written.

Such was the condition of the English drama when that illustrious company of playwrights who immediately preceded Shakspeare entered on their career.

We remember to have read in some mediæval

¹ He thus ridicules these violations in the popular plays. "In three hours he runs round the world, marries, gets children, makes children men, men to conquer kingdoms, murder monsters, and bring gods from heaven and fetch devils from hell."

writer a story to this effect. A traveller on enchanted ground found himself in the course of his wanderings in a wild and spacious valley. Around him were all the indications of fertility, rich even to rankness. The trees rose dense and high; heavy parasites hung in festoons from their trunks and branches; thick mantling shrubs matted the glades at their feet. Wherever his eye rested, it rested on what appeared to be exuberant vegetation. But the spectacle proved on a nearer view to be delusive. He soon perceived that what he beheld was the semblance of fecundity, not the reality. The trees and the parasites which clung to them were without bloom and without vitality; the underwood which appeared to be flourishing so vigorously beneath was arid and dwarfed. Scarcely a flower he saw was worth the culling. Scarcely any of the fruits that had ripened were worth the gathering. Suddenly, as by magic, the scene changed. Every tree, every shrub, burst into luxuriant life. The leaves and the grass were of the hue of emeralds; the ground was ablaze with flowers. All was perfume, all was colour. He stood dazzled and intoxicated amid a wilderness of sweets—a teeming paradise of tropical splendour. Very similar to the phenomenon witnessed by the traveller of the fable is the phenomenon presented to the student of English poetry at the period on which we are now entering. From the beginning of the sixteenth century there had been no lack of literary activity. With what assiduity the drama had been cultivated we have already seen; with what assiduity

other branches of poetry had been cultivated will be apparent to any one who will glance at a catalogue of the writers who flourished during these years. And yet, voluminous as this literature is, how little has it contributed to the sum of our intellectual wealth! how frigid, how lifeless does it appear when placed in contrast with the literature which immediately succeeded it! The revolution which gave us *The Faery Queen* for *The Mirror for Magistrates*, the lyrics of Greene and Lodge for the lyrics of Gascoigne and Turberville, the sonnets of Daniel for the sonnets of Watson, the eclogues of Spenser for the eclogues of Googe, *Tamburlaine* for *Gorboduc*, and *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* for *Ralph Roister Doister* and *Misogonus*, seems like the work of enchantment. It was in truth the work of an age rich beyond precedent in all that appeals to the emotions and to the imagination, acting on men peculiarly susceptible of such influences and possessed of rare powers of original genius.

The golden era of Elizabethan literature may be said to date its commencement from the seven years which lie between 1579 and 1587—in other words, with the first characteristic poems of Spenser and the first characteristic plays of Marlowe, with the publication of *Euphues* and with the composition of the *Arcadia*. Never, perhaps, has there existed an age so fertile in all that inspires and in all that nourishes poetic energy as that which opens the third decade of Elizabeth's reign. It was contemporary with a great crisis in European history, and with a great crisis in

European thought. The discomfiture of the partisans of Mary of Scotland, the execution of Mary herself, and the destruction of the Armada in the following year, had paralysed that mighty coalition which had long been the terror of Protestant Europe. The effect of the events of 1588 on the world of Marlowe and his contemporaries was indeed similar to the effects of the Persian victories on the world of Æschylus and Sophocles. In both cases what was at stake was the very existence of national life. In both cases were arrayed in mortal oppugnancy the Oromasdes and the Arimenes of social and intellectual progress. In both cases the moral effects of the triumph achieved were in proportion to the magnitude of the issues involved. Joy, pride, and hope possessed all hearts. Patriotism burned like a passion in the breasts of all men, and, like a passion, chivalrous loyalty to the lion-hearted Queen. The pulse of the whole nation was quickened. The minds of men became under this fierce stimulus preternaturally active, and every faculty of the mind preternaturally alert. And this was not all. The forces at work in that mighty revolution which transformed the Europe of Mediævalism into the Europe of the Renaissance were everywhere fermenting. It was the fortune of England to pass simultaneously through two of the greatest crises in the life of states, and the excitement of the most momentous of epochs in her spiritual history was coincident with the excitement of the most momentous of epochs in her political history. The energy thus stimulated operated on materials richer and more various than

perhaps any other age could have afforded. Philosophy, having cast off the shackles of scholasticism, had entered on the splendid inheritance which had descended to it from antiquity. Astronomy was unravelling the secrets of the skies, and natural science the secrets of the land and sea. The discovery of America and the North-West Passage had unveiled another world to the wonder of Europe, and in widening the horizon of experience had widened also the horizon of imagination.¹ Heroes, second to none in the annals of endurance and adventure, were exploring every corner of the habitable globe, and coming home to record experiences as marvellous as those which Ulysses poured into the ears of Alcinous and Arete. The discovery of movable types had given wings to knowledge. The Muse of History had awakened with Grafton and Stow, and Hall and Holinshed; and the Muse of Romantic Fiction long before with Malory, and now with his successors. The translators of the Bible had unlocked the lore of the East. Scholars

¹ This is illustrated very strikingly by Spenser—

Many great regions are discovered,
Which to late age were never mentioned;
Who ever heard of the Indian Peru?
Or who in venturous vessel measured
The Amazon, huge river, now found true?
Or fruitfulest Virginia who did ever view?

Yet all these were when no man did them know,
Yet have from wisest ages hidden been,
And later times things more unknown shall show.
Why then should witless man so much misween,
That nothing is but that which he hath seen?
What if within the moon's fair shining sphere,
What if in every other star unseen,
Of other worlds he happily should hear?

Fairy Queen, Bk. II. Prologue.

were revelling among the treasures of that noble language which, in the fine expression of Gibbon, "gives a soul to the objects of sense and a body to the abstractions of philosophy," and which has during more than twenty centuries been to the world of mind what the sun is to the physical world. The study of Roman literature had been rendered more fruitful by the precedence now given to the classics of the Republic and Early Empire over the writers of the later ages. "The youth everywhere," says Strype, "addicted themselves to the reading of the best authors for pure Roman style, laying aside their old barbarous writers and schoolmen." All that had been contributed to the general stock of intellectual wealth by modern Italy was becoming more and more familiar to Englishmen, and scarcely anything of note appeared either in France or Spain which was not sooner or later pressed into the service of English genius.

But there were other sources of inspiration, other stores on which the writers of that age could draw. The world in which they moved was in itself rich in all the materials which poetry most cherishes. In the first place there had, for many centuries, been gradually accumulating an immense mass of local traditions. Every county, nay, every hundred and every city in England, had its heroes and its annals. We have only to open works like Warner's *Albion's England*, and Drayton's *Polyolbion*, to see that there was scarcely a mountain, a river, a forest, which did not teem with the mingled traditions of history and fable. The mythology out of which Livy constructed

the early chronicles of Latium was in truth not more dramatic and picturesque than that which lived on the lips of Elizabethan England. Much of this lore had been embodied in rude ballads—some of it had found its way into the metrical romances, and more recently into *The Mirror for Magistrates*; but it owed its popularity to oral transmission. With this heroic mythology was blended a mythology which had its origin in superstition. To the England of the sixteenth century the unseen world was as real as the world of the senses. Its voice was everywhere audible, its ministers were everywhere present. What reason has with us coldly resolved into symbolism was with them simple fact. The substantial existence of the Prince of Darkness and the Powers of Hell, of the Bad Angel who is man's enemy, and of the Good Angel who is his friend, was no more questioned by an ordinary Englishman of that day than the existence of the human beings around him. In his belief the communion between the world of the living and the world beyond the tomb had never been interrupted. What Endor witnessed was, in his opinion, what half the churchyards in England had witnessed. "If any person shall practise or exercise any invocation of any evil or wicked spirit"—these are the words of a grave Act of Parliament passed as late as the 9th of June 1604—"or shall consult with, entertain, feed, or take up any dead man, woman, or child out of his, her, or their grave . . . such offender shall suffer the pains of death as felons." The angels, which were of old beheld passing and repassing between earth and

heaven, passed, it was believed, and repassed still on their gracious errands.

How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
To come to succour us that succour want!
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The flitting skies, like flying pursuivant,
Against foul fiends to aid us militant!
They for us fight, they watch and duly guard,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant.

So sang Spenser, and what he sang he believed. "It may," says one of the most popular writers of those times, "be proved from many places of the Scripture that all Christian men have not only one angel, but manie whom God employeth to their service." Nor was it from the Bible only that the supernatural creed of that age was derived. The awful forms with which the sublime and gloomy imagination of the Goths had peopled the tempest and the mist; the elves, fays, and fairies, and all that "bright infantry" who, in the graceful mythology of the Celts, hold high revel

on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margent of the sea;

the Demons of the fire, "who wander in the region near the moon"; the Demons of the air, "who hover round the earth"; Mandrakes and Incubi, Hellwaines and Firedrakes—these were to the people of that age as real as the objects which met their view in daily life, and to doubt their existence was, says Grose, held to be little less than Atheism.¹

¹ Whoever would understand how completely even the most enlightened minds were under the dominion of these superstitions would do well to turn to Henry More's *Antidote against Atheism*; see too Nash's *Pierce Penilesse*,

If again we turn to the social life of those times, we find ourselves in a world equally picturesque and equally romantic. In the country dwelt a race as blithe and simple as that which peopled the Sicily of Theocritus or the Delos of the Homeric Hymn. The English peasantry had, even when groaning under the yoke of a martial and despotic aristocracy, been distinguished by their light-heartedness and love of social merriment. They were now in the first intoxication of newly-found freedom. They were now, for the first time in their history, settled and prosperous. If the happiness of a class is to be estimated by its wealth and political importance, it would be absurd to point to the sixteenth century as the golden age of rural England. But those whose criterion is not that of the political economist will, we think, agree with Goldsmith that this was in truth the Saturnian era of English country life. No fictitious Arcadia has half the charm of the world described to us by Stubbes and Stow, by Tusser and Burton. It was a world in which existence appears to have been a perpetual feast. Every house had its virginal, its spinnet, and its lute. Each season of the year had its festivals. At Christmas every farmstead and country mansion, garnished with holly and evergreens, and bright with the blazing yule, rang with tumultuous merriment. Songs and dances, possets and loving-cups, ushered in, amid pealing bells, the New Year; and the New Year's revels were often pro-

edit. Payne Collier, p. 74 *seqq.* For other illustrations see Mr. T. A. Spalding's interesting little book, *Elizabethan Demonology*, and Drake's *Shakspeare and his Times*, vol. i. chap. ix.

tracted till it was time to wreathe the wassail-bowls and marshal the pageants of Twelfth Night. Then came the feasts of Candlemas and Easter, which terminated the festivities of Easter and opened the festivities of Spring. On May-day all England held carnival. Long before it was light the youth of both sexes were in the woods gathering flowers and weaving nosegays. By sunrise there was not a porch or door without its chaplet, and while the dew was still sparkling on the grass the May-pole had been dressed, "twentie or fortie yoke of oxen, everie oxe having a sweet posie of flowers tied to the tip of his horns, drawing it solemnly home." On its arrival at the appointed place it was set up. The ground round it was strewn with hawthorn sprays and green boughs. Summer-hall booths and arbours were erected on each side of it. Processions from the neighbouring hamlets, headed by milkmaids leading a cow festooned with flowers and with its horns gilt, were a common feature in these picturesque festivities. At harvest time the last load, as it was carried to the barn, was crowned with flowers, while round a figure made of corn young men and women, with a piper and a drum preceding them, shouted joyously or sang songs.¹ Nor was it the younger people only who kept festival. "In the month of May," says Stow—we cannot resist quoting this exquisitely beautiful passage—"namely on May Day in the morning, every man, except impediment, would walk

¹ See the passages from Hentzner and Dr. Moresin cited by Drake, vol. i. p. 187.

into the sweet meddowes and green woods, there to rejoyce their spirits with the beauty and savour of sweet flowers, and with the harmonie of birdes praying God in their kinde." It would have required very little sagacity to foretell that a world such as this was destined to bear rich fruit in poetry.

And yet at no period in its history did our poetry pass through so perilous a crisis. For some time it seemed not unlikely that the Renaissance would cast the same spell on English genius as it had cast on the genius of Italy and France. Its effect there had been to kindle an enthusiasm for the works of the ancients so intense and absorbing that it amounted to fanaticism, a fanaticism against which all the forces which commonly direct, and all the causes which commonly inspire, intellectual and artistic activity were powerless to contend. No art escaped the infection, but poetry suffered most. A wretched affectation of classical sentiment, of classical imagery, of classical diction, pervaded it. To write tragedies in the style of Seneca, and comedies in the style of Plautus and Terence; to construct, out of materials furnished by Theocritus and Virgil, rococo Arcadias; to parody Pindar, Anacreon, and Horace in odes and dithyrambs, Ovid and Tibullus in elegies, and the ancient idylls in tinsel imitations; to torture Italian and French into Greek and Latin phrases and idioms; and to substitute the metres of ancient classical poetry for the metres proper to the poetry of Romance—became the employment of men who, had they succeeded in casting off the fetters of this degrading servitude, might have

attained no mean rank among poets. In Italy this taste was all but universal. In France it found expression, to take a few typical illustrations, in the tragedies of Jodelle and Garnier; in the detestable *Pindariques* and equally detestable epic of Ronsard; in his wretched metrical experiments, and in those of Jan Antoine de Baif, Passerat, Pasquier, and Nicholas Rapin; in the *Foresteries* and *Pastorale* of Jean Vauquelin de la Fresnaie¹; in Remy Belleau's ingenious adaptation of the *Metamorphoses* and of the Orphic *Lithica*. Thus poetry became more and more divorced from nature and life, losing all sincerity, losing all originality. An exception indeed must be made in favour of the Romantic school, but even the Romantic school passed under the yoke. That our poetry narrowly escaped the same fate cannot, we think, be doubted. When we remember the superstitious reverence with which the writings of antiquity were regarded, the ardour with which the study of those writings was pursued, the ridiculous extent to which the affectation of learning was carried in the pulpit, in Parliament, and even in the taverns and playhouses, the classicism and pseudo-classicism predominant everywhere in academic and aristocratic circles,² the enormous popularity of the literature of

¹ The motto of this school may be expressed in the words of Ronsard :—

Les François qui mes vers liront,
S'ils ne sont et Grecs et Romains,
En lieu de ce livre ils n'auront
Qu'un pesant faix entre les mains.

La Franciade—Epilogue (De Luy-Mesme).

² “When the queen paraded through a county town almost every pageant was a Pantheon. When she paid a visit at the house of any of her nobility,

Italy, the influence exercised by that literature, the contempt for Romanticism at the Court and at the Universities, the constant endeavours on the part of both to dethrone it, and, above all, the culture and learning which distinguished the Romancists themselves, we cannot but feel how imminent was the danger. About 1579 a desperate attempt was made by Gabriel Harvey and Sir Philip Sidney to revolutionise English poetry on strictly classical principles; and for this purpose a club was formed, a prominent member of which was Spenser. Rhyme and our ordinary metres were to be superseded by iambic trimeters, hexameters, elegiacs, sapphics, asclepiads, and the like, detestable specimens of which may be found in Spenser's collected poems and in Sidney's *Arcadia*. Though Spenser had the good sense to abandon this particular form of pedantic classicism, he was in his *Shepherd's Calendar* only too faithful to other forms of it. And what is true of the *Shepherd's Calendar* is true of much of his other work, and of much of the work of his brother poets. A large portion, indeed, of the lyric and miscellaneous poetry of the time is as deeply tainted with this affectation as the poetry of Italy and France. In the drama classicism made a long and obstinate stand

she was saluted by the Penates and conducted to her privy chamber by Mercury. Even the pastrycooks were expert mythologists. At dinner select transformations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were exhibited in confectionery, and the splendid iceing of an immense historic plum-cake was embossed with a delicious basso-relievo of the destruction of Troy. In the afternoon, when she condescended to walk in the garden, the lake was covered with Tritons and Nereids; the pages of the family were converted into wood nymphs, who peeped from every bower, and the footmen gambolled over the lawns in the figure of Satyrs."—Warton's *History of English Poetry*, vol. iv. p. 323.

against the Romancists, as the comedies of Lyly and the tragedies of Lady Pembroke, Brandon, Samuel Daniel, and Ben Jonson show. "My verse," says Daniel, in words which exactly express the attitude of himself and his school to the popular schools—"my verse respects nor Thames nor Theatres." The most authoritative critics were, moreover, almost universally on the side of classicism. Sidney and Webbe, for example, defended it in its most extravagant forms, and Ben Jonson was its apostle and apologist to the last. Fortunately, however, the instinctive energy of genius prevailed; fortunately the England of Elizabeth was not the Italy of Leo; fortunately our poetry had its roots in a soil so rich that the parasites which might, under less propitious conditions, have choked its growth and exhausted its vitality, served only

to become
Contingencies of pomp.

And that the poetry of those times should have found its chief embodiment in the drama is not surprising. The age was, in itself, pre-eminently an age of activity. It had no tendency to introspective brooding; it troubled itself, as a rule, very little about the ideal and the infinite; it was no worshipper of Nature. It was indeed the expression in acme of reaction against all that had been characteristic of mediævalism. Its central figure was man in action; its distinguishing feature was its sympathy with humanity. Thus human life, its failures, and its triumphs, thus human kind, their passions and pecu-

liarities, became objects of paramount interest. Nor was this all. London was already the centre of the social and intellectual life of the kingdom, and was attracting each year from the provinces and the Universities all who hoped to turn wit and genius to account. The refuge of literary adventurers in our day is the periodical and daily press. In those days there were no journals and no periodicals, for there was no reading public. But among the changes introduced by the dissolution of the old system was the appearance and rapidly-increasing importance of a class which corresponded to that on which our popular press relies for support. Since the accession of the Tudors a great change had passed over London. Peace and a settled government had transformed the rude and martial nobility of the Plantagenets into courtiers and men of mode. Their hotels swarmed with dependants who would, a generation back, have found occupation in the camp; but who were now, like their masters, devoted to gaiety and pleasure. Contemporary with this revolution in the upper sections of society was the rise of a great commercial aristocracy. Each decade found London more prosperous, more luxurious, more thickly peopled. By the middle of Elizabeth's reign it presented all the features peculiar to great capitals and great seaports. A large industrial population, branching out into all the infinite ramifications of mercantile communities, mingled its multitudes with the crowd of men of rank and fashion who affected the neighbourhood of the Court, and with the swarms of adventurers and

sycophants who hung loose on the town or subsisted on the charity of noble houses. The Inns of Court, thronged with students often as accomplished as they were idle and dissolute, had already assumed that half-fashionable, half-literary character, which for upwards of two centuries continued to distinguish them. But no quarter of London stirred with fuller life than that which was then known as the Bankside. It was here that the lawless and shifting population, which came in and passed out by the river, found its temporary home. In the taverns and lodging-houses which crowded those teeming alleys were huddled together men of all nations, of all grades, of all callings; Huguenot refugees, awaiting the turn which would restore them to their country; Switzers and Germans who, induced partly by curiosity and partly by the restlessness which a life of adventure engenders, flocked over every year from the Low Countries; half-Anglicised Italians and half-Italianated Englishmen; filibusters from the Spanish Main and broken squatters from the Portuguese settlements; soldiers of fortune who had fought and plundered under half the leaders in Europe; desperadoes who had survived the perils of unknown oceans and lands where no white man had ever before penetrated; seamen from the crews of Hawkins and Drake and Cavendish and Frobisher. And among this motley rabble were to be found men in whose veins ran the blood of the noblest families in England—Strangwayses and Carews, Tremaynes and Throgmortons, Cobhams and Killigrews.

Such was the London of Elizabeth. It was natural

that the cry of these people should be for amusement. Too intelligent to be satisfied with the stupid and brutal pastimes then in vogue with the vulgar, and too restless and illiterate to find pleasure in books, it was equally natural that they should look to the stage to supply their want. And the stage responded to the call.

In 1574 Elizabeth granted to James Burbage and four other players the right of exhibiting dramatic performances within the precincts of the City. This was strongly opposed both by the Puritans and by the Common Council. A memorial was addressed to the Queen. A counter-memorial on the part of the players followed. At last a compromise was effected. Burbage and his company, quitting the strict limits of the City, established themselves in Blackfriars. The construction of a regular theatre was begun. The Puritans were furious, the burgesses of Blackfriars petitioned; but Burbage triumphed, and London had its first playhouse. From this moment dates the commencement of the modern stage. The temporary platforms which had been erected, as occasion required, in inn-yards—in the yard, for example, of the Bull in Bishopsgate Street, and the Belle Savage on Ludgate Hill—now gave place to permanent theatres. The erection of Burbage's Blackfriars theatre in 1576 was followed in the same year by the erection of the "Theatre" and the "Curtain" in Shoreditch. Each decade added to the number, and in the latter years of Elizabeth's reign London could boast of at least eleven of these edifices. What had before scarcely

risen to the dignity of a distinct vocation now became a thriving and lucrative profession. The strolling companies who, under the real or pretended protection of noble houses, roamed the country, now flocked, certain of employment, to the metropolis. Indeed, the demand for those who could produce, and for those who could act, plays was such that the supply, though abundant, almost to miraculousness, could scarcely keep pace with it.

In an incredibly short space of time the semi-scholastic, semi-barbarous drama of preceding playwrights was transformed into that wonderful drama in which, as in a mirror, the world of those times saw itself reflected ; which, in its infinite flexibility, adapted itself to every taste, to every understanding ; which, in its all-absorbing, all-assimilating activity, disdained nothing as too mean, excluded nothing as too exalted ; and which, in its maturest manifestations, is among the marvels of human skill and human genius. In little more than twelve years from its first appearance that drama had not only superseded every other form of popular entertainment, but had cast into the shade every other school of contemporary poetry. It had disputed the pre-eminence of the classical playwrights by turning against them their own weapons. Declamation as ornate and stately, dialogue as brilliant with antithesis and as rich with the embellishments of scholarship and culture, as had ever won the applause of Elizabeth and Leicester, were now heard in every playhouse from Shoreditch to Southwark. It had rivalled the poetry of Spenser in gorgeousness of

diction and in teeming fertility of imagination and fancy. No narrative poetry since Chaucer's could compare with it in vividness of description and portraiture. In pastoral poetry nothing equal to its pictures of country life and country scenery had appeared since the Sicilian Idylls. It had pressed into its service the graces of the lyric and the sonnet. It had enriched itself with all that Sidney and his circle had borrowed from Petrarch and Sanazzaro, and with all that Lyly and his disciples had derived from Spain. And it had transformed what it had borrowed. It had extended the dominion of art. It had revealed new capacities in our language and new music in our verse. To the fathers of this drama belongs the glory of having moulded that noble metre which, even in their hands, rivalled the iambic trimeter of Greece, but which was in the hands of its next inheritor to become the most omnipotent instrument of expression known to art.

We will now, as far as our space will permit, pass in review the chief of those remarkable men who were the fathers of our Romantic drama, and who, whatever may be their inferiority in point of genius, are certainly entitled to the honour of having been the masters of Shakspeare—Thomas Kyd, Robert Greene, George Peele, Christopher Marlowe, John Lyly, and the unknown author of *Arden of Faversham*. In the lives and characters of these men, where particulars have survived, there is so much in common that it is as easy to describe them collectively as separately. They were all men peculiarly typical of the New Age.

They were all sprung from the lower and middle classes; they were all born in the provinces; they had all gone up from the provinces to the Universities, and from the Universities, with the object of seeking a livelihood as authors by profession, to London. They were all thorough men of the world. They had all had ample experience of either fortune. They all hung loose on the town, three of them being distinguished, even in those wild times, by the ostentatious dissoluteness of their lives, and coming prematurely to mournful and shameful ends. Not less striking was the similarity between them in point of genius and culture. They were all scholars. Peele translated one of the *Iphigenias*; Marlowe paraphrased the poem of the pseudo-Musæus, and has left versions of Ovid's *Amores* and the first book of the *Pharsalia*. The sapphics and elegiacs of Greene cannot indeed be commended for their purity or elegance, but they are a sufficient indication of his mastery over the Latin language; and what is true of the sapphics and elegiacs of Greene is true also of the hexameters of Kyd and Marlowe. Lyly's classical attainments are sufficiently attested, not only by his respectable Latin prose, but by his novel and by his comedies. Of their familiarity with the literatures of modern Europe there is scarcely a page in their writings which does not afford abundant proofs. In mere learning, indeed, and in their fondness for displaying that learning, they bear some resemblance to the poets of Alexandria and Augustan Rome; but, though they owed much to culture, they owed more to nature. They were all of

them pre-eminently poets. They had all, in the phrase of Juvenal, bitten the laurel. In all of them—Kyd and the author of *Arden of Faversham* excepted—the faculties which enable men to excel as painters of life and manners and character were less conspicuous than the faculties which impress lyric poetry with grace and fancy, and narrative poetry with picturesqueness and dignity. If again we except Kyd and the author of *Arden of Faversham*, they have all left plays which stand higher as poems and idylls than as dramas.

Of these poets the youngest in years but the first in importance was Christopher Marlowe. Born in February 1563-64, the son of a shoemaker at Canterbury, he received the rudiments of his education at the King's School in that city. He subsequently matriculated at Benet College, Cambridge, taking his degree as Bachelor of Arts in 1583, and his degree as Master of Arts four years later. Of his career at Cambridge, and of his movements between 1583 and 1587, nothing is known. It is probable that by the end of 1587 he had settled in London, having already distinguished himself by the production of *Tamburlaine*. The rest of his life is a deplorable record of misfortune, debauchery, and folly, suddenly and frightfully terminated, before he had completed his thirtieth year, by a violent death in a tavern-brawl at Deptford.

When Dryden observed of Shakspeare that he "found not, but created first the stage," he said what was certainly not true of Shakspeare, but what would, with some modification, be true of Marlowe. To no

single man does our drama owe more than to this ill-starred genius. It was he who determined the form which tragedy and history were permanently to assume. It was he who first clothed both in that noble and splendid garb which was ever afterwards to distinguish them. It was he who gave the death-blow to the old rhymed plays on the one hand, and to the frigid and cumbersome unrhymed classical plays on the other. In his *Doctor Faustus* and in his *Jew of Malta* it would not be too much to say that he formulated English romantic tragedy. He cast in clay what Shakspeare recast in marble. Indeed, Marlowe was to Shakspeare in tragedy precisely what Boiardo and Berni were to Ariosto in narrative. It is certain that without the *Orlando Innamorato* we should never have had the *Orlando Furioso*. It is more than probable that without the tragedies of Marlowe we should never have had, in the form at least in which they now stand, the tragedies of Shakspeare. Of the History in the proper sense of the title, Marlowe was the creator. In his *Edward I.* Peele had, it is true, made some advance on the old Chronicles.¹ But the difference between Peele's *Edward I.* and Marlowe's *Edward II.* is the difference between a work of art and mere botch-work. Peele's play is little better than a series of disconnected scenes loosely tagged together; superior indeed in style, but in no way superior in structure

¹ Though the date of the publication of Peele's *Edward I.* is subsequent to that of Marlowe's *Edward II.*, we have little doubt that in point of composition it preceded Marlowe's play.

to *The Famous Victories of Henry V.* and to *The Troublesome Raigne of King John.* In *Edward II.* Marlowe laid down, and laid down for all time, the true principles of dramatic composition as applied to history. He showed how, by a judicious process of selection and condensation, of modification and suppression, the crowded annals of many years could in effect be presented within the compass of a single play. He studied perspective and symmetry. He brought out in clear relief the central figure and the central action, grouping round each in carefully-graduated subordination the accessory characters and the accessory incidents. Chronology and tradition, when they interfered either with the harmony of his work or with dramatic effect, he never scrupled to ignore or alter, rightly discriminating between the laws imposed on the historian and the laws imposed on the dramatist. He was the first of English playwrights to discern that in dramatic composition the relative importance of events is determined, not by the space which they fill in history, but by the manner in which they impress the imagination and bear on the catastrophe. Nor are these Marlowe's only titles to the most distinguished place among the fathers of English tragedy. He was not only the first of our dramatists who, possessing a bold and vivid imagination, possessed also the faculty of adequately embodying its conceptions, but the first who, powerfully moved by strong emotion, succeeding in awakening strong emotion in others. In the hands of his predecessors tragedy had been powerless to touch the heart. As

a rule, it had maintained the same dead-level of frigid and nerveless declamation. In his hands it resumed its ancient sway over the passions; it unlocked the sources of terror and pity. To compare Marlowe with the Attic dramatists would be in the highest degree absurd, and yet we must go back to the Attic dramatists to find anything equal to the concluding scenes of *Dr. Faustus* and *Edward II*.

The appearance of *Tamburlaine* has been compared to the appearance of *Hernani*. Its professed object was to revolutionise the drama. The war which Victor Hugo declared against classicism Marlowe declared against the

jigging veins of rhyming mother wits,
And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay.

The most remarkable of his innovations was the substitution of blank verse for rhyme and prose. It would not, of course, be true to say that Marlowe was the first of our poets to employ blank verse in dramatic composition. It had been employed by Sackville and Norton in *Gorboduc*; by Gascoigne in *Jocasta*; by Lyly in his *Woman in the Moon*; by Hughes in his *Misfortunes of Arthur*; and by the authors of other plays which in all probability preceded *Tamburlaine*. But these plays had been confined exclusively to private audiences, and had not been designed for the popular stage. Nor must we confound the blank verse of Marlowe with the blank verse of these dramas. In them it differed only from the heroic couplet in wanting rhyme. It had made no advance on Grimoald's experiments more than

thirty years before. It had no variety, no incatenation, no harmony; in the contemptuous phrase of Nash, it was a drumming decasyllabon, and a drumming decasyllabon there seemed every probability of it continuing to remain. It is remarkable that, since its first introduction into our language by Surrey, though it had passed through the hands of poets whose other compositions show that they possessed no common mastery over metrical expression, its structure had never altered. The genius of Marlowe transformed it into the noblest and most flexible of English metres. If we examine the mechanism of his verse, we shall see that it differed from that of his predecessors in the resolution of the iambic into tribrachs and dactyls, in the frequent substitution of trochees and pyrrhics for monosyllables, in the large admixture of anapests, in the interspersion of Alexandrines, in the shifting of the pauses, in the use of hemistichs, in the interlinking of verse with verse. It was therefore no mere modification, no mere improvement on the earlier forms of blank verse; it was a new creation.

The effect of Marlowe's innovation was at once apparent. First went the old rhymed stanzas. We doubt whether it would be possible to find a single play written in stanzas subsequent to 1587. Next went the prose Histories. Then commenced the gradual disappearance of rhymed couplets. Thus plays which previous to 1587 were written in rhyme, we find after 1587 interpolated with blank verse. Such is the case with *The Three Ladies of London*;

such is the case with *Selimus*; such is the case with the recast of *Tancred and Gismunda*. Before 1587 Peele habitually employed rhyme; after 1587 he discarded it entirely. Greene, who, if we interpret rightly an ambiguous passage in the Epistle prefixed to his *Perimedes*, regarded Marlowe's innovation with strong disfavour, almost immediately adopted it. In all his extant dramas blank verse is employed. By 1593 it was firmly established.

How profoundly the genius of Marlowe impressed his contemporaries is evident not only from the frequent allusions to his writings, but from the imitations, close even to servility, of his characters and his style, which abound in our dramatic literature between 1587 and 1600. Sometimes we have whole plays which are mere parodies of his; such would be Greene's *Alphonsus* and Peele's *Battle of Alcazar*; such also would be the anonymous play, *Lust's Dominion*. His Barabas and Tamburlaine took the same hold on the popular imagination as the Conrads and Laras and Harolds and Manfreds of a later age, appearing and reappearing, variously modified in numerous forms. Tamburlaine became the prototype of the stage hero. Barabas became the prototype of the stage villain. To enumerate the characters modelled on these creations of Marlowe would be to transcribe the leading *dramatis personæ* of at least two-thirds of the heroic dramas in vogue during the latter years of the sixteenth century. Indeed, the influence—and we are speaking now not of the general, but of the particular influence—exercised by Marlowe over the

works of his brother poets would, if traced in detail, be found to be far more extensive than is generally supposed. To go no further than Shakspeare, *Richard II.* is undoubtedly modelled on *Edward II.*; the character of Richard is the character of Edward slightly modified. In the second and third parts of *Henry VI.*, if Shakspeare did not actually work in co-operation with Marlowe, he set himself to imitate with servile fidelity Marlowe's method and Marlowe's style. Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* is Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*; so in some degree is Shylock; so in a considerable degree is *Richard III.* In the nurse who attends on Dido we have a sort of first sketch of the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*. From *The Jew of Malta* Shakspeare derived many hints for *The Merchant of Venice*. From the concluding scene of *Dr. Faustus* he borrowed, or appears to have borrowed, one of the finest touches in *Macbeth*.¹

From a historical point of view it would, therefore, be scarcely possible to over-estimate the importance of Marlowe's services. Regarded as an initiator, he ranks with Æschylus. But criticism must distinguish between merit which is relative and merit which is intrinsic. It may sound paradoxical to say of the father of our Romantic drama, of the master of Shakspeare, that his genius was in essence the very reverse of dramatic, nay, that

¹ In both tragedies a storm is raging without, while the deeds of horror are proceeding in ghastly silence within. Cf. the last scene of *Dr. Faustus*, edit. 1616, and *Macbeth*, Act II. Sc. 3. It is of course possible that the scene may have been interpolated by another and later hand, and borrowed from *Macbeth*.

the temper of his genius was such as absolutely to disqualify him from excelling as a dramatist. And yet such is the case. In Marlowe we have the extraordinary anomaly of a man in whom the instincts of the artist and the temper of the poet met in oppugnancy. Induced partly perhaps by the exigencies of his position, partly no doubt influenced by the age in which it was his chance to live, the materials on which he worked he elected to cast in a dramatic mould. Nature had endowed him with a singular sense of fitness and harmony, with an appreciation of form Greek-like in its delicacy and subtlety. This is conspicuous in all he has left us, in his too scanty lyric poetry, in his too scanty narrative poetry. When, therefore, he applied himself to dramatic composition, the same instinct directed him unerringly to the true principles on which a drama should be constructed. It caused him to turn with disgust from the rude and chaotic style of the popular stage; it preserved him, on the other hand, from the pedantry and affectation of the classical school. In a word, what propriety of expression, what nice skill in the technique of his art, could accomplish, that Marlowe achieved, and the achievement has made his name memorable for ever in the history of the English drama.

But the moment we turn from Marlowe as an artist to Marlowe as a critic and painter of life, we feel how immeasurable is the distance which separates him, we do not say from Shakspeare, but from many of the least distinguished of his brother playwrights.

His genius and temper have been admirably described by Drayton :—

Next Marlowe, bathed in the Thespian springs,
Had in him those brave translunary things
That the first poets had ; his raptures were
All ayre and fire, which made his verses clear,
For that fine madness still he did retain,
Which rightly should possess a poet's brain.

It was in this translunary sphere that he found his characters ; it was under the inspiration of this fine madness that he delineated them. Of air and fire, not of flesh and blood, are the beings who people his world composed. Regarded as counterparts of mankind, as studies of humanity, they are mere absurdities. They are neither true to life nor consistent with themselves. Where they live they live by virtue of the intensity with which they embody abstract conceptions. They are delineations, not of human beings, but of superhuman passions.

The truth is that in the constitution of Marlowe's genius—and we are using the word in its widest sense—there were serious deficiencies. In the first place, he had no humour ; in the second place, he had little sympathy with humanity, and with men of the common type, none—a defect which seems to us as detrimental to a dramatist as colour-blindness would be to a painter. In the faculty, again, of minute and accurate observation—a faculty which is with most dramatists an instinct—he appears to have been almost wholly lacking. Nothing is so rare in Marlowe as one of those touches which show that the poet had, as Wordsworth expresses it, “his eye on his

object." His dramas teem with blunders and improprieties such as no writer who had observed mankind even with common attention could possibly have committed, and in the vagueness and conventionality of the epithets which are in almost all cases applied by him to natural objects we have conclusive evidence of the same defective vision.

The words in which Sallust describes Catiline will apply with singular propriety to Marlowe: "Vastus animus semper incredibilia, semper immoderata, nimis alta cupiebat." This is in truth Marlowe's distinguishing characteristic. It is one of the sources of his greatness as a poet; it is the main source of his weakness as a dramatist. It was to him what the less exalted egotism of a less exalted nature was to Byron. If we except Edward II., all his leading characters resolve themselves into mere incarnations of this passion. In Tamburlaine and Guise it is the illimitable lust for dominion. In Barabas it is the illimitable lust for wealth. In Faustus it is the insanity of sensual and intellectual aspiration. As impersonations of mankind neither Tamburlaine nor Guise, neither Barabas nor Faustus, will bear examination for a moment. Of Marlowe's minor characters there is not one which impresses itself with any distinctness on the memory. Indeed, they have scarcely more individuality than the "fortisque Gyas, fortisque Cloanthus" of the *Æneid*, or those heroes in the *Iliad* who are mentioned only to swell the number of the slain. Who ever realised Mycetas or Techelles, or Usumcasane or Mathias, or Ferneze or Ithamore

or Lodowick? What distinguishes Amyras from Celerin? Or Jacomo from Barnardine? Or Valdes from Cornelius? Or Calymath from Martin del Bosco? Take again his women. Where they are not mere puppets, as is the case with Zenocrate, Abigail, Bellamira, and Catharine, they are preposterously untrue to nature, as is the case with Olympia, Isabella, and Dido. In one play, and in one play only, has Marlowe displayed a power of characterisation eminently dramatic. In *Edward II.* Gaveston, Mortimer, and the King himself are as admirably drawn as they are admirably contrasted. The sculptural clearness with which the figure of Mortimer, cold, stern, remorseless, stands out from the crowded canvas; the light but firm touches which place the King's young favourite, the joyous, reckless, pleasure-loving Gaveston, vividly before us; the power and subtlety with which the quickly alternating emotions in the breast of Edward, from his first conflict with opposition to his last appalling agony, are depicted—all these combine to place this drama on a far higher level than any of Marlowe's other plays. *Edward II.* is said to have been the poet's last work. If it was so, it shows that, as his life advanced, his genius was widening and mellowing, and it increases our regret for the accident which cut short his career. But that we lost in Marlowe a possible rival of Shakspeare is an opinion in which we by no means concur. It is true that, though the two poets were born within a few weeks of each other, Marlowe was the master and Shakspeare the

disciple. It is true also that the best work produced by Shakspeare at twenty-nine—to judge at least from what he gave to the world—was greatly inferior to the best work of Marlowe. But this proves little more than that the powers of Shakspeare were, up to a certain point, slow in developing, and that is almost always the case with men whose genius is of an objective cast. What we fail to see in Marlowe is any indication of power in reserve. Comparatively scanty as his work is, he is constantly repeating himself, and in the few noble and impressive scenes on which his fame as a dramatist mainly rests, we discern what is perhaps the most unpromising of all symptoms in the work of a young writer, excessive elaboration. That *Edward II.* is a considerable advance on his former plays, that it is marked throughout by greater sobriety, and that it exhibits a wider range of sympathy and insight than he has elsewhere displayed, is indisputable. But this is all, and this is not much. In a dramatic poet of the first order we look for qualities which are as conspicuously absent in Marlowe's last and maturest play as they are in the plays which preceded it.

We are not, then, inclined to assign to Marlowe that high position among dramatists which it has of late years been the fashion, and in our opinion the absurd fashion, to claim for him. But as a poet he seems to us to deserve all the praise which his admirers give him. The words "rapture" and "inspiration," which are, when applied to most poetry, little more than figurative expressions, have, when applied

to his poetry, a strict propriety. Never before had passion so intense, had imagination so vivid and aspiring, had fancy so rich and graceful, co-existed in equal measure and in equal harmony.

The energy of Marlowe's genius was twofold. On the one side he is a transcendental enthusiast ; on the other side he is a pagan hedonist. On the one side he reflects the intense spiritual activity, the preternatural exaltation, not merely of the emotions, but of the imagination and the intellect, which were among the most striking effects of the Renaissance in England. On the other side he reflects not less faithfully the peculiarities of that great movement as it affected academic Italy. The ardour of his passion for the ideal, and the intensity with which he has expressed that passion, are what impress us most in his dramas. In his poems, on the other hand, the predominating element is pure sensuousness. It is the poetry not of desire, but of fruition. No poem in our language is more classical, in the sense at least in which Politian and Sanazzaro would have understood the term, and assuredly no poem in our language is more sensuously lovely, than *Hero and Leander*. It reminds us in some respects of the best episodes in the *Metamorphoses*, and it reminds us still more frequently of Keats's narratives, not, indeed, of *Isabella* or of *The Eve of Saint Agnes*, but indirectly of *Endymion*, and directly of *Lamia*.

But of all Marlowe's gifts the most remarkable, perhaps, was his gift of expression. It may be said of him, with literal truth, that he "voluntary moved

harmonious numbers." Of the music of his verse it is superfluous to speak. On this point we are inclined to go almost as far as Mr. Swinburne. If the melodies of Shakspeare and Milton are fuller and more complex, if the music of the poets who have during the present century revealed new capacities in our language has a subtler fascination, no clearer, no nobler, no more melodious note than the note of Marlowe vibrates in our poetry. His diction, too, when at its best—as we see it, for example, in *Hero and Leander*, in the lyric *Come Live with Me*, and in such passages in his plays as Tamburlaine's speech to Zenocrate, as Faust's apostrophe to the shade of Helen, as Edward's last speeches to Leicester, as Guise's soliloquy, as Baldwin's speech to Spenser—seems to us to approach as nearly to the style of the Greek masterpieces as anything to be found in English. It is the perfection of that diction which is at once natural and poetical, at once simple and dignified.

Next in importance to Marlowe comes Robert Greene. Of all the writers who between 1584 and 1592 followed literature as a profession, Greene was the most fertile and the most popular. "In a day and a night," says his friend Nash, "would he have yarked up a pamphlet as well as in seven years, and glad was that printer that might be so blest as to pay him dear for the very dregs of his wit." He distinguished himself as a poet, as a novelist, as a social satirist, and as a playwright. And to Greene, both as an individual and as an author, a peculiar

interest attaches itself. In the first place, no man of that age is so well known to us, for he has himself, in some of the most remarkable confessions which have ever been given to the world, laid bare the innermost secrets of his life. In the second place, he is, of all our writers, the writer who illustrates most clearly the exact nature of the influence exercised by the Renaissance on English genius; and in the third place, there is about many of his writings a singular charm and grace. He was born at Norwich, probably about 1560. In due time he proceeded to Cambridge, taking his Bachelor's degree as a member of St. John's College in 1578, and his Master's five years later as a member of Clare Hall. At Cambridge he appears to have been equally distinguished by his profligacy and his abilities. Between 1578 and 1583 he travelled on the Continent, visiting Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Poland, and Denmark. He returned, he tells us, an adept in all the villainies under the heavens, a glutton, a libertine, and a drunkard. But he returned, it is certain, with other and more honourable attainments—with rich stores of observation and experience, with a genius polished and enlarged by communion with the Classics of Rome and Florence, and with a mind profoundly impressed by the loveliness and splendour of the lands which Nature loves. He commenced his literary career about 1583, with a prose novel, *Mamillia*, which was three years afterwards succeeded by a second part; and, as this is dated from his study in Clare Hall, it is probable that he resided at Cambridge between the period of his

return from the Continent and his taking his Master's degree. By 1586 he had apparently settled in London. The story of Greene's life, from this period to his death, has been so often told that it is quite unnecessary to tell it again here. We will only say that for our own part we are strongly inclined to suspect that his debaucheries have been very much exaggerated. That he was a man of loose principles and loose morals, and that he was reckless and improvident, is evidently no more than truth; but that he was what his enemies have asserted, and what he himself, under the influence of religious reaction, morbidly aggravated by remorse, represented himself to have been—a prodigy of turpitude—seems to us utterly incompatible with facts. Greene's life was and must have been a life of incessant literary activity. It is almost certain that many of his writings have perished, and yet enough remains of his poetry and prose to fill eleven goodly volumes, and enough survives of his dramatic composition to fill two volumes more. And all this was the work of about eleven years. Now, making every allowance for rapid and facile workmanship, is it within the bounds of possibility that a man sunk so low in sensuality and dissoluteness as Greene is said to have been could in that time have produced so much, and so much, we may add, that was good? Again, four years before his death he was incorporated at Oxford, a certain proof that, well known as his name must have been—for he was then in the zenith of his fame—scandal had not been busy with it there. His patrons and

patronesses, moreover, were to be found among the most virtuous and honourable persons then living. It is not, indeed, likely that the Riches and Arundels, the Talbots and Stanleys, troubled themselves very much about the private life of a needy man of letters; but it is very certain that, had Greene's excesses been as notorious as we are told they were, he would never have dared to address the Lady Fitzwaters or the Lady Mary Talbot as he addresses them in the Dedications of *Arbasto* and *Philomela*, and he would scarcely have ventured to subscribe himself in a Dedication to a man in the position of Thomas Barnaby, "your dutiful and adopted son." If other testimony were needed it would be afforded by his writings. Not only are they absolutely free from any taint of impiety or impurity, but they were in almost all cases produced with the express object of making vice odious and virtue attractive, and in this laudable endeavour he was prompted by the noblest of motives. He was certainly no hypocrite, for the most malignant of his enemies could not have borne more hardly on his weaknesses than he has himself done. He was not impelled by the love of gain, for, though morality was popular in the fiction of that day, there is abundant evidence to show that immorality was much more popular. It is, moreover, due to Greene to say that the chief testimony against him is derived from his own confessions, and that, if these confessions afford evidence of his delinquencies, they afford not less certain evidence of the presence of a disease which caused him to magnify

those delinquencies tenfold. Nothing can, we think, be clearer than that the mind of this unhappy man was, like that of Bunyan, distempered by religious hypochondria. In every page of his autobiographical pamphlets we are reminded of *Grace Abounding*. He tells us, for example, how on one occasion he had an inward motion in Saint Andrew's Church at Norwich; how he was satisfied that he deserved no redemption; how a voice within him told him that he would, unless he speedily repented, be wiped out of the Book of Life; how he cried out in the anguish of his soul, "Lord have mercy upon me, and give me grace"; but how he "fell again, like a dog, to his vomit," and became in the judgment of the godly the child of perdition. The world has long done Bunyan the justice which he did not do himself, and has rightly discriminated between facts as they were and facts as his morbid fancy painted them. How necessary it is to make allowance for sensibilities similarly diseased in the case of Greene will be evident from this. He has over and over again reproached himself, and reproached himself most bitterly, with prostituting his genius to unworthy purposes. He speaks almost with agony of his amorous and wanton pamphlets. He calls himself a second Ovid. "But, as I have," he says in the preface to his *Mourning Garment*, "heard with the ears of my heart Jonas crying, Except thou repent—I have resolved to turn my wanton works to effectual labours." The natural inference from this is that he had published works of a grossly immoral character. But what is the truth? There is not, as

we have already observed, a single line in Greene's writings which has the least tincture of licentiousness. On the contrary, scrupulous purity distinguishes everything which has come from his pen. And that what he said had no reference to works which are lost is absolutely certain. All he meant was that the composition of love-stories was an idle and frivolous employment, unworthy of a man who aspired to teach; but this became, when translated into the jargon of *The Mourning Garment* and *The Repentance*, precisely what tipcat and bell-ringing became when translated into the jargon of *Grace Abounding*. Now, if Greene could, under the influence of religious hallucination, so totally and so absurdly misrepresent himself as a writer, nothing can be more likely than that in his confessions his character as a man has been equally distorted. The truth is that his proper place is not, as his biographers would have us believe, beside Boyse and Savage, Cuthbert Shaw and Dermody, but beside Steele and Fielding, beside Goldsmith and Burns—in other words, beside men who were rather morally weak than morally depraved, whom we censure reluctantly and sincerely love, and who, whatever may have been their infirmities, were sound in the noble parts.

We have indulged ourselves in these remarks because we freely own that Greene is a great favourite with us. We have read and re-read his poems, his novels, and his plays, and at each perusal their pure and wholesome spirit, their liveliness, their freshness, their wealth of fancy and imagination,

their humour, their tenderness, their many graces of style, have gained on us more and more. The best of his novels—and the best are undoubtedly *Pandosto*, *Philomela*, *Never too Late*, and *A Groatsworth of Wit*, though in some instances tainted with the vices of euphuism—are in their way admirable. They strike, it is true, no deep chords, nor are they in reflection and analysis either subtle or profound; but they are transcripts from life, and they are full of beauty and pathos. Greene's favourite theme is the contrast between the purity and long-suffering of woman, and the follies and selfishness of man. In all the novels to which we have referred appears the same angelic figure; in all of them the same meek, patient, blameless sufferer passes through the same cruel ordeal, and her tormentor is her husband. He is either insanely jealous, as is the case with Pandosto and Philippo in the first two novels, or unfaithful and dissolute, as is the case with Francesco and Roberto in the last two. In either case the life of the unhappy wife is one long martyrdom, and in depicting that martyrdom Greene shows a power and pathos not unworthy of him who painted the wrongs and virtues of Constance and Griselda. It is said that Greene drew, like Fielding, on his own experience, that he found his Bellarias, his Philomelas, his Isabellas, where Fielding found Amelia, in his own wife; and that he found his Francescos, his Robertos, and his Philippos, where Fielding found Booth, in himself. Of the autobiographical character of two at least of his novels,

Never too Late and *A Groatsworth of Wit*, there can be no question.

Greene followed Sanazzaro in interspersing prose with poetry, and it is in his prose writings that all his non-dramatic poetry is, with one or two exceptions, to be found. Mr. Symonds remarks that the lyrics of Greene have been under-rated. We quite agree with him. Greene's best lyrics are not indeed equal to the best lyrics of Lodge and Barnfield. In spontaneity and grace Rosalynde's madrigal is incomparably superior to Menaphon's song. In finish and felicity of expression Menaphon's picture of the maid with the "dallying locks" must yield to Rosader's picture of Rosalynde, and, charming as Greene's octosyllabics always are, they have not the charm of Barnfield's *Nightingale's Lament*. But Greene's ordinary level is far above the ordinary level of both these poets. For one poem which we pause over in theirs, there are five which we pause over in his. He has, moreover, much more variety. What, for example, could be more exquisite, simple though it is even to homeliness, than Sephestia's song in *Menaphon*? The tranquil beauty of the song beginning "Sweet are the thoughts that savour of content," in the *Farewell to Folly*, and of Barmenissa's song in *Penelope's Web*, fascinates at once and for ever. His fancy sketches are delicious. The picture of Diana and her bathing nymphs invaded by Cupid in the little poem entitled *Radagon in Dianam*, the picture of the journeying Palmer in *Never too Late*, of Phillis in the valley in *Ciceronis Amor*, of—

The God that hateth sleep,
Clad in armour all of fire,
Hand in hand with Queen Desire,

in the Palmer's Ode, are finished cameos of rare beauty. Not less charming are the love poems, and among them is one real gem, the song in *Pandosto*, "Ah, were she pitiful as she is fair." Like all the erotic poetry of the Renaissance, they owe, it is true, more to art than to nature. Some of them are studies from the Italian, others from the French. Occasionally they appear to have derived their colouring from the Apocryphal books of the Bible. In Menaphon's song, beginning "Too weak the wit," there is an oriental gorgeousness. But the element predominating in them is classicism, and classicism of the Italian type, the classicism of Bembo, of Sanazzaro. Thus they appeal rather to the fancy than to the heart, rather to the senses than to the passions. And so graceful is their imagery, so rich is their colouring, so pure and musical is their diction, that they are never likely to appeal in vain.

To the composition of his plays Greene brought the same qualities which are conspicuous in his novels and his poems, the same sympathetic insight into certain types of character and certain phases of life, the same fertility in inventing incident and detail, the same faculty of pictorial as distinguished from dramatic representation, the same refined pathos, the same mingled artificiality and simplicity, the same exuberant fancy, the same ornate and fluent eloquence of style. But he brought little else. Such

qualities never have sufficed, and never could suffice, to produce dramas of the first order. In Greene's hands they have sufficed to produce dramas which, though not of the first order, are among the most delightful and fascinating productions of Elizabethan genius. But this praise applies, it must be admitted, only to three out of the six plays which have come down to us, and it would have been well for Greene's fame if the other three had perished. In that case his best work would not have been confounded, as it almost always is confounded, with his worst. In that case his critics would not, like Mr. Symonds, have observed generally of his blank verse that it "betrays the manner of the couplet," or generally of his style that it is cumbersome and pedantic. Indeed, the contrast between the plays of the first group—*The History of Orlando Furioso*, *Alphonsus King of Aragon*, and *The Looking-Glass for London and England*, which was written in conjunction with Lodge—and the plays of the second group—*Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, *James IV. of Scotland*, and *The Pinner of Wakefield*—is in point of style so great that, if we had only internal evidence to guide us, we should be inclined to assign them to different writers. The first two were, in all probability, Greene's earliest attempts at dramatic composition in blank verse. They are in the style of *Tamburlaine*, and they reflect too faithfully the worst features of that work. For with all its fustian they have none of its music, with all its absurdities as a drama they have none

of its beauties as a poem. *The Looking-Glass* is a wild and silly medley, for which we suspect Lodge was mainly responsible. It is, therefore, as the author of the plays of the second group, and as the author of those plays only, that Greene deserves attention.

Of the importance of these plays in the history of our drama there can be no question. It is not too much to say that the author of *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* and of *James IV. of Scotland* stands in the same relation to Romantic Comedy as the author of *Tamburlaine* and *Edward II.* stands to Romantic Tragedy. If, historically speaking, it is only a step from *Edward II.* to *Henry V.*, it is, historically speaking, only a step from *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* and *James IV.* to the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and to *As You Like It*. We have only to glance at the condition of Comedy before it came into Greene's hands to see how great was the revolution effected by him. On the popular stage it had scarcely cast off the shackles of the old barbarism. It still clung to the old stanzas; or if, as in the *Knack to Know a Knaves* and in the *Taming of a Shrew*, it employed blank verse, the blank verse was blank verse hardly distinguishable from prose. It still clung to the old buffoonery. It still remained unilluminated by romance or poetry. In the theatre of the classical school, on the other hand, it was a mere academic exercise, as it was with Lyly, or a mere copy from the Italian, as it had been with Gascoigne. We

open Greene's comedies, and we are in the world of Shakspeare, we are with the sisters of Olivia and Imogen, with the brethren of Touchstone and Florizel, in the homes of Phebe and Perdita. We breathe the same atmosphere, we listen to the same language.

It was Greene who first brought Comedy into contact with the blithe bright life of Elizabethan England, into contact with poetry, into contact with romance. He took it out into the woods and the fields, and gave it all the charm of the idyll; he filled it with incident and adventure, and gave it all the interest of the novel. A freshness as of the morning pervades these delightful medleys. Turn where we will—to the loves of Lacy and Margaret at merry Fressingfield, to the wizard friar and the marvels of his magic cell at Oxford, to the patriot Pinner and his boisterous triumphs, to Oberon with his fairies and antics revelling round him, to the waggeries of Slipper and Miles—everywhere we find the same light and happy touch, the same free joyous spontaneity. His serious scenes are often admirable. We really know nothing more touching than the reconciliation of James and Dorothea at the conclusion of *James IV.*, and nothing more eloquent with the simple eloquence of the heart than Margaret's vindication of Lacy in *Friar Bacon*. The scene again in the second act of *James IV.*, where Eustace first meets Ida, would in our opinion alone suffice to place Greene in the front rank of idyllic poets. Greene's plots are too loosely constructed, his characters too sketchy, his grasp and

range too limited, to entitle him to a high place among dramatists, and yet as we read these medleys we cannot but feel how closely we are standing to the Romantic Comedies of Shakspeare. And the resemblance lies not merely generally in the fact that the same unforced and genial energy is at work in both, and in the fact that both have, as it were, their roots in the same rich soil, but in particular resemblances. In Greene's women, in Margaret, for example, in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, and in Ida and Dorothea in *James IV.*, we see in outline the women most characteristic of Shakspearean Romantic Comedy, while Slipper, Nano, and Miles are undoubtedly the prototypes of the Shakspearean clown. Nor could any one who compares the versification and diction of Shakspeare's early romances with the versification and diction of Greene's medleys fail to be struck with the remarkable similarity between them. It seems to us that Shakspeare owed at least as much to Greene as he owed to Marlowe. In the rhymed couplets and in the blank verse of his earlier comedies the influence of Greene is unmistakable, and we will even go so far as to say that the prose dialogue of Shakspeare—we are not of course speaking of his maturer plays—was modelled on the prose dialogue of Greene. Again, in *The Pinner of Wakefield* we have an example of that pure homely realism, admirable alike in tone, touch, and style, of those simple faithful transcripts of ordinary commonplace life, which were to form so important a feature in Shakspearean Comedy and History.

Third in the triumvirate with Marlowe and Greene stands George Peele. The merits of Peele have been greatly over-rated. They were ridiculously over-rated by his contemporaries. They have been inexplicably over-rated by modern critics. Gifford classes him with Marlowe. Dyce ranks him above Greene. Campbell, in an often-quoted passage, pronounces his *David and Bethsabe* to be the "earliest fountain of pathos and harmony that can be traced in our dramatic literature," and goes on to speak of the "solid veracity" and "ideal beauty" of his characters. The tradition, originating from Isaac Reed, that Milton borrowed the plot of *Comus* from *The Old Wives' Tale*, has, we suspect, greatly contributed to this factitious reputation. The truth is that of Peele's six plays there is not one which can be said to be meritorious as a drama, or to have contributed any new elements to dramatic composition. *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes* is in the style of *Damon and Pythias*, and is, if possible, more insufferably dull. *The Arraignment of Paris* is a mere pageant. Neither *Edward I.* nor *The Battle of Alcazar* contains a single effective scene, or a single well-drawn character, a single touch of genuine pathos, a single stroke of genuine humour. In *The Old Wives' Tale* we have an attempt in the manner of Greene, but the difference between the medleys of Greene and the medley of Peele is the difference between an artfully-varied panorama and the anarchy of distempered dreams. From beginning to end it is a tissue of absurdities. Ulrici, indeed, discerns, or affects to

discern, a profound allegory underlying these absurdities. We can only say that even with the clue which he has furnished we fail to see the allegory. Peele's best play is undoubtedly *David and Bethsabe*, but it is best only in the sense of containing his finest writing. As a drama it is neither better nor worse than the others—that is to say, it is perfectly worthless.

Peele's sole merit lies in his style and in a certain fertility of fancy. His style cannot indeed be praised without reservation. It is too ornate; it is too diffuse; it is wholly lacking in nerve and energy; but it is flowing and harmonious. The heroic couplets in his *Arraignment of Paris* have a sweetness and fluency such as English versification had only occasionally attained before, and, though his blank verse has the monotony necessarily characteristic of blank verse constructed on the model of the couplet, it is at times exquisitely musical. If that noble measure, which is to poetry what the organ is to music, owed its trumpet-stop to Marlowe, it may, we think, with equal truth be said to owe its flute-stop to Peele. The opening scene of *David and Bethsabe* is in mere mellifluousness equal to anything which has been produced in blank verse since.

It is to be regretted that Peele did not follow the example of Guarini and Tasso. Had he applied himself to the composition of such works as the *Aminta* and the *Pastor Fido*, he would have excelled. In his drama may be discerned all the characteristics of those most pleasing idylls, the same delight in dallying with tender and graceful images, the same

splendour of colouring, the same curious mixture of paganism and sentiment, the same instinctive selection of such scenes and objects in Nature as charm rather than impose, the same felicity in rhetorically portraying them, the same liquid harmony of verse, the same ornate elaboration of diction. Nor, on the negative side, is the resemblance less striking. Like them, Peele has no power over the passions, no rapidity of movement, nothing that stirs, nothing that elevates.

With the names of Marlowe, Greene, and Peele are usually associated the names of Thomas Nash and Thomas Lodge. Of Nash's dramas one only has survived, an absurd and tedious medley entitled *Summer's Last Will and Testament*. He is stated also to have been Marlowe's coadjutor in that wretched travesty of the fourth *Æneid*—*Dido, Queen of Carthage*—the most worthless portions of which may on internal evidence be with some confidence assigned to him. Nash's laurels were, it should be added, won on other fields. As a prose satirist he had neither equal nor second among his contemporaries. And what is true of Nash as a dramatist is true also of Lodge. Of all Lodge's multifarious writings, his contributions to the drama form the least valuable portion. He has written excellent prose pamphlets. His versions of Seneca and Josephus have placed him beside North and Holland in the front rank of Elizabethan translators. His *Fig for Momus* gives him a prominent place among the fathers of English classical satire. He is the author of some of the most

exquisitely graceful and musical lyrics to be found in our early poetry. His pastoral poems, and above all his *Scilla's Metamorphosis*, though of a beauty too luscious and florid to please a severe taste, are among the good things of their kind. On his delightful prose romance, *Rosalynde, or Euphues' Golden Legacy*, Shakspeare founded *As You Like It*, and it is doing Lodge no more than justice to say that we still turn with pleasure from the drama to the novel. But his powers, versatile though they were, were not such as qualified him to excel as a dramatist. His only extant play—of his share in *The Looking-Glass for London and England* we have already spoken—is *The Wounds of Civil War*. It treats of the struggle between Marius and Sulla, and is based partly on Plutarch and partly on apocryphal matter, which is, for aught we know, Lodge's own invention. The plot is ill constructed, the characters, though by no means without individuality, are without interest, and the action, in spite of its studied variety, has all the effect of the most tiresome monotony. Historically, the work is interesting as a step towards Shakspeare's Roman plays. It is, perhaps, the first English drama inspired by Plutarch, and the first attempt to romanticise, in the technical sense of the term, Roman history. Thus the introduction of a clown, two comic scenes, in one of which a Gaul talks in a jargon of French and broken English, and a scene in which Marius makes a complaint to respondent Echo, link it with the Romance. The blank verse is easy and fluent, but very monotonous,

and is studiously constructed on the model of the couplet.

In passing from this school of playwrights to Kyd, we pass to a dramatist whose proper place in the history of the Elizabethan stage it is extremely difficult to determine. Almost everything relating to Kyd rests on mere conjecture. His biography is a blank. We know neither the date of the composition of his plays nor the date of their first appearance. Of the three extant dramas attributed to him, the authenticity of two is more than doubtful, and, to complete our perplexity, the text of the only drama which is indisputably his has been largely interpolated by other hands. Indeed, all that is certainly known about him is that he was the author of a piece called *The Spanish Tragedy*, that he translated, or, to speak more accurately, paraphrased, Robert Garnier's *Cornelia*, and that by the year 1594 he stood high among the tragic poets of his day. The two other plays, which have with more or less probability been ascribed to him, are *Jeronimo*, which forms the first part of *The Spanish Tragedy*, and a tragedy called *Soliman and Perseda*. That *Jeronimo* is rightly attributed to him cannot, we think, be doubted by any one who has compared it carefully with *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Cornelia*. Ulrici's objections seem to us frivolous in the extreme. With regard to *Soliman and Perseda* we cannot speak with equal confidence. If it was written by Kyd it was probably his earliest work.

The popular notion about Kyd is that he was a

sensational dramatist of the worst type ; that he was the first to employ on our stage the ghastly and repulsive machinery of classical Italian melodrama ; and that he expressed himself in a style which was worthy of Pistol. And this is true ; but it is not the whole truth. Even admitting that the passages which Lamb calls the salt of *The Spanish Tragedy* are not from Kyd's hand, it is impossible to question the genius of the man who sketched in this and in the sister play the characters of Andrea, of Horatio, of Balthazar, of Lorenzo, of Jeronimo ; who painted the parting scene between Andrea and Belimperia, and the scene in which Jeronimo and Isabella lament their murdered son. That his style is often absurdly stilted no one would deny, but this peculiarity is rather its besetting fault than its distinguishing characteristic.

Kyd's services to English tragedy were, we think, more important than is commonly supposed. He stands midway between two great schools ; between the literary and academic school on the one hand, and the domestic and realistic school on the other. Regarded superficially, he might perhaps be confounded with a mere copyist of Italian models. His diction is not unfrequently classical even to pedantry. The first two acts of *The Spanish Tragedy* might have been written by the author of *The Misfortunes of Arthur*. He indulges largely in the arid and monotonous declamation peculiar to Italian tragedy ; he delights in the exhibition of "carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts." And yet, with all this, the impression which his plays make on us is very different from the

impression made on us by the Italian tragedies. Nor is it difficult to explain the reason. The canvas of Kyd is more crowded; his touch is broader and bolder, his colour fuller and deeper; his action is infinitely more diversified, animated, and rapid; his characters are more human; he has more passion, he has more pathos. If he aims too much at sensational effects, he is sometimes simple and natural. Again, his style—we are speaking more particularly of the style of the first part of *Jeronimo*—when compared with that of the Italian school, presents almost as many points of dissimilarity as it presents points of resemblance. It is, as a rule, freer and looser, of a coarser texture, of a more colloquial cast. We trace in it for the first time that curious mixture of homeliness and pomp, that rugged vigour, that sparseness of poetic ornament, that indifference to verbal harmony, which distinguish the style of the domestic plays. In a word, Kyd so modified Classical Tragedy that he eduved out of it a species of drama as distinct from that of Marlowe, Greene, and Peele on the one hand, as it was distinct from that of Sackville, Gascoigne, and Hughes on the other. It is this which constitutes his historical importance. It is this which connects him with that remarkable school of which we are about to speak, a school of which it would not indeed be true to say that he was the founder, but of which he was in many important respects the forerunner.¹ We refer, of course, to the domestic dramatists.

¹ It is of course quite possible that we are attributing to Kyd what belongs to the interpolators of his text in the case of *The Spanish Tragedy*, and that

In the tragic theatre of Marlowe, Greene, and Peele the realistic element had, as we have seen, been subordinate to the poetic. It was as poets and scholars that they had approached Tragedy; it was as poets and scholars that they constructed it. Hence it was that, if they indulged, they indulged but rarely in vulgar comedy. Hence, in selecting their plots, they were careful to choose such subjects as recommended themselves by their dignity or impressiveness. With equal solicitude had they employed all the resources of learning and rhetoric to elevate and embellish their style, and all the resources of imagination and fancy to cast the halo of poetry over life. The result was, that they had produced works which stand much higher as poems than as dramas—works which are not indeed without dramatic merit, and dramatic merit of a high order, but which, where they reflect humanity, reflect it principally in its heroic or poetic aspects. Wherever they had attempted, as they had sometimes done in Comedy, to be strictly realistic, they had as a rule signally failed.

With the writers of domestic Tragedy it was exactly the reverse. With them the poetic element was not simply subordinate to the realistic, but almost entirely disappeared. Rejecting fiction, they took their stand on naked fact. Rejecting transcendentalism, they

in the case of the first part of *Jeronimo* we are attributing to him a play which he never wrote. It is quite possible that he was himself a purely "classical" dramatist, and that his characteristic work is to be found in *Cornelia* and in the first two acts of *The Spanish Tragedy*, but the balance of probability inclines towards the view which we have taken. In either case the point of interest lies in the evolution of the realistic drama out of the classical.

prided themselves on their prosaic fidelity to prosaic truth. For the graces of expression they cared nothing.

Naked tragedy,
Wherein no filed points are foisted in,
To make it pleasing to the ear or eye,
For simple truth is gracious enough
And needs no other points of glozing stuff.

This, in the words of one of the greatest of them, was their aim. If they exercised imagination, they exercised it only in filling up interstices in tradition, in vivifying incident, in animating character, in analysing emotion and passion. The materials on which they worked were of the coarsest kind. Some wretched story of calamity and crime, such as was then and is now constantly repeating itself in the lower and middle walks of life, furnished them with their plots. Thus, on the murder of a London merchant near Shooter's Hill, in 1573, was founded the anonymous tragedy of *A Warning for Fair Women*. Thus, on the murder of a country gentleman in Kent, about 1551, was founded *Arden of Faversham*. On a murder of peculiar atrocity, which occurred in Thames Street, Robert Yarrington partially founded his *Two Tragedies in One*; while on the murder of two children by their father at Calverley, in Yorkshire, was founded *The Yorkshire Tragedy*.

Of these plays, the earliest in point of publication, and presumably therefore the earliest in point of composition, was *Arden of Faversham*, which was printed in 1592. The author of this most powerful play is not known. Whoever he was, he not only possessed in-

comparably the greatest purely dramatic genius which had revealed itself in tragedy anterior to the period of Shakspeare's mature activity, but he exercised, in conjunction with the writers of the school of which he was the representative, a very marked influence on the development of popular Tragedy. Of so high an order of excellence is this drama, that many eminent critics have not hesitated to attribute it to Shakspeare. From that opinion we altogether dissent. It has no external evidence in its favour, and the internal evidence appears to us conclusive against it. Nothing can be more marked than the style of this play. Nothing can be more marked than the style of Shakspeare. So marked indeed is his style—his early style—his middle style—his later style—that the merest tyro in literary criticism could never confound them with the style of any other poet. Now between the style of *Arden* and the style of the plays which Shakspeare was writing in and before 1592 there is absolutely no resemblance at all. On the contrary, they are radically and essentially dissimilar. If, again, we turn to the characters, it is impossible not to feel how wide is the interval which separates the author of this drama from the youthful Shakspeare. Of all Shakspeare's powers the power of characterisation was the slowest in developing itself; indeed, it developed itself so gradually that the successive stages in its progress may be distinctly traced in the plays which lie between what Gervinus calls the Period of Apprenticeship and about the end of 1598. Nothing, therefore, can be more unlikely than that in 1592 he

should have suddenly exhibited a grasp and power in the delineation of character not unworthy of the maturity of his genius, and then as suddenly have relapsed into the immaturity and sketchiness of his early manner. To suppose that the firm strong hand which drew *Alice Arden*, *Michael*, and *Mosbie* was the same hand which must at the same time, or about the same time, have been faltering on the canvas of *Titus Andronicus*, the *Comedy of Errors*, and the three parts of *Henry VI.*, is to suppose what is not merely contrary to all analogy, but simply incredible. Could the composition of *Arden* be assigned to a period subsequent to 1592 or 1593, the difficulty would not be so great. But to date it later is impossible. It appeared exactly as we have it now in that year. And whether it be, as Payne Collier and Mr. Symonds surmise, the recast of an older play or an original production, one thing is clear—the hand which recast it is not the hand which recast *The First Part of the Contention* and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*; while if on the other hand it be, what we have no doubt it is, an original work, it is equally clear that it could have emanated only from a master in the art of dramatic composition and realistic effect. And that in 1592 Shakspeare most assuredly was not.

We are convinced then that, in spite of the contention of Tieck, Ulrici, and Charles Knight, Shakspeare was not the author of *Arden of Faversham*, but that it was the production of a powerful and original genius, the possessor of which it is now

impossible to identify. Whoever he was, he occupies a foremost place in the history of pre-Shakspearean drama, not only as being the typical representative, and in all probability the inaugurator, of a new and important school of Tragedy, but on account of the intrinsic excellence of his work, and on account of the influence which he and his school undoubtedly exercised on the dramatic activity of Shakspeare.

In turning to Lyly we are turning to a playwright who occupies a very singular and, from a historical point of view, an important position. With the dramatists of whom we have been speaking he had little or no connection. He had early found a patron in the Lord Treasurer Burleigh, in whose household he appears for some time to have resided, though it is uncertain in what capacity. He thus became attached to the aristocracy and the Court, and for their amusement during many years he was chief caterer, first as a novelist and then as a dramatic poet. The publication of the first part of *Euphues* in 1579, which was followed by the second part in the following year, not only placed him at the head of the fashionable authors of his time, but enabled him to exercise an influence over contemporary literature generally such as perhaps no other writer has ever done. In six years both parts of the work appear to have gone through five editions.¹ A stout octavo volume would scarcely suffice to deal adequately

¹ Arber's edition of *Euphues*, Introduction, p. 13. No student of English literature can mention Professor Arber's name without gratitude, so great is the boon which his reprints, with their admirable bibliographical introductions, have conferred on all who are interested in our old authors.

with the influence of Lyly's romance on the poetry and prose of the last two decades of Elizabeth's reign. Nay, if its effect on Shakspeare alone were exhaustively treated, such illustration would probably swell to a bulky treatise.

Lyly brought to the composition of his plays the same qualities which he had displayed in his romance—learning, fancy, and wit. All that characterises the style and diction of *Euphues* characterises the style and diction of these dramas; the same excess of smoothness, sententiousness, and epigram, of alliteration and assonance, the same studied antithesis, not merely in the arrangement of the words and clauses, but in the ideas and sentiments, the same accumulation of superfluous similes and illustrations, drawn sometimes from the facts but more frequently from the fictions of natural history, the same affectation of continuous references to ancient mythology and history pedantically piled up for the sake of learned display, the same plethora of wit as distinguished from humour, and of fancy as distinguished from imagination. Like *Euphues*, they are, and are designed to be, caviare to the general. With one exception they are all founded on classical subjects, and with one exception they are all in prose. Lyly's method is to select some fable in classical fiction, not for the purpose of developing it dramatically, but that it may form the centre of a fantastic medley of his own invention. To flatter Elizabeth, her ladies, and her nobles, to hold up Philip and Spain to the contempt of good patriots, to present under the guise of allegory

such incidents in public and private life as were then of interest to the Court circle, and to read wholesome lectures on morals and politics—these were his aims when his aims were serious. It was thus that he dealt with the legend of Endymion and Midas, the first being the story of Leicester and the Countess of Sheffield, and the second the perversion of the fable in Apuleius into an allegory of the relations between England and Spain. In *Sappho and Phaon* he drew on a legend which had formed the subject of a play by Menander and a play by Antiphanes, and which furnished Ovid with one of the most eloquent of his *Heroides*; but he omits the catastrophe. For the leap from the Leucadian rock are substituted the disenchantment of Sappho and her dominion over Cupid and his arrows. Thus the allegory stands confessed, and what Shakspeare afterwards condensed in ten immortal lines,¹ Lyly had spun out through five weary acts. In *Alexander and Campaspe*, a story told by Pliny is the centre of an extraordinary farrago in which philosophers and harlots, serving-men and courtiers with Greek names and English manners, lecture, wrangle, jest, and jostle each other in most bewildering confusion. But perhaps the most remarkable of these medleys is *Galathea*. Here ancient legend is scarcely discernible, and appears to have suggested nothing more than the sacrifice due to Neptune, which was of course borrowed from the story of Andromeda, and Galathea's

¹ The passage referring to Elizabeth and Leicester, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act II. Sc. 1, 155-164.

change of sex, a curious adaptation of the metamorphosis of the classical Galatea's daughter. Of this strange variety of drama Lyly was the inventor, and it died with him. It had, indeed, no principle of life, it was a mere *lusus artis*, the abortive product of perverted ingenuity. To one of his plays a peculiar interest belongs. In *Mother Bombie* we have an example of pure Italian Comedy in an English dress, and whoever will compare it with its prototypes and models will have no difficulty in understanding the evolution, formally at least, of English prose Romantic Comedy from the Classical Comedy of Italy. Superficially regarded, it might seem to be modelled on the Latin comedies, but it differs importantly from them, and this difference lies in its resemblance to the Italian modifications of Plautus and Terence. The *Suppositi* of Ariosto had already been introduced into English by Gascoigne, and this had been the first step in the naturalisation of Italian Comedy. Lyly, by placing the scene in England, by introducing English characters and English manners, and, in a word, by anglicising all but the framework and architecture, completed its naturalisation in our literature. *Mother Bombie* is incomparably his best drama—is indeed his only drama in the true sense of the term. The plot is constructed with great skill, the characters are by no means lay figures, and the monotonous wit which is the distinguishing characteristic of his dramas is here relieved by touches of genuine humour.

The influence of Lyly on the development of the drama was undoubtedly considerable. He set the fashion of clothing Comedy in prose, and he formulated genteel and artificial as distinguished from familiar and realistic dialogue. To his example are no doubt to be traced the point, vivacity, wit, and grace which begin to be conspicuously affected in the style of Comedy towards the close of the sixteenth century. He gave the first models for that elaborate word-play, for that keen terse interchange of witty badinage, in which Shakspeare so much delights to engage his Benedicts and his Beatrices, his Touchstones and his Launcelots.¹ And if he refined and subtilised dialogue he refined and subtilised fable, as is illustrated both by *Mother Bombie* and by *Galathea*. He extended the domain of Comedy into the realm of pure fancy, and as the author of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakspeare was undoubtedly his disciple. But this was not all. As his plays, though written in the first instance for representation before the Court, were in some cases at least repeated before the audience at Blackfriars, they form an important link between the classical and the popular drama. The multitude were proud to be presented with what had found favour with the world of culture and fashion. The taste for classicism, and with all that is implied by classicism, was affected by every one who aspired to be a connoisseur. Thus the Comedy

¹ See particularly the dialogue between Manes, Granicus, and Psyllus, *Alex. and Camp.*, Act I. Sc. 2; between Diogenes and Sylvius, *Id.*, Act. V. Sc. 2; between Memphio and Dromio, *Mother Bombie*, Act. I. Sc. 2.

of the Court, reacting on the Comedy of the public theatres, aided the evolution of those masterpieces which were marked by the characteristics of both—the Romantic Comedies of Shakspeare. That Shakspeare was familiar with Lyly's dramas is proved conclusively not only by unmistakable echoes and repetitions of particular passages in them,¹ but by his many obvious imitations of Lyly's dialectic and turns of expression, and by the *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Such was the condition of the English drama when Shakspeare entered on his career. It had attained, as we have seen, a high point of poetical and rhetorical excellence in the hands of Marlowe and Peele. By Greene it had been brought into contact with ordinary life, but with ordinary life in its romantic aspects. Lyly had enriched it with wit and fancy. The author of *Arden of Feaversham* had divorced it from poetry and romance, and taught it to become simply realistic. It remained for Shakspeare to combine, and in combining to perfect, all these elements. Nothing can shake the supremacy of that mighty genius. Nothing can diminish the immense interval which separated him in the maturity of his powers from the most gifted of his predecessors and contemporaries. And yet, when we reflect on what had been accomplished during the period which we have been passing under review, it is impossible not to be struck with the extent of his indebtedness

¹ Some of these have been collected by Mr. Fairhold. See his edition of Lyly's Plays—Notes, *passim*.

to those who preceded him. Everything had, as it were, been made ready for his advent. The tools with which he was to work had been forged; the patterns on which he was to work had been designed; the material on which he was to work had been prepared.

LORD CHESTERFIELD'S LETTERS ¹

To this volume now belongs a mournful and pathetic interest. The editing of these Letters was the last service which one of the most accomplished and scholarly of English noblemen was to render to literature. It was undertaken, not as a labour of love in the ordinary sense of the term—for Lord Carnarvon has himself admitted that he had at first little pleasure in his task—but as a labour of love in another and a higher sense. It was undertaken with the pious intention of fulfilling the wishes of the dead, and of contributing to lighten the obloquy which had long rested on the memory of the dead. With characteristic unobtrusiveness, Lord Carnarvon has made no reference to the circumstances which must have rendered his self-imposed task doubly irksome. Our respect for the motives which prompted him to devote his leisure to the least attractive of literary employments passes into admiration when we know, as we now know, that it was not only under the pressure

¹ *Letters of Philip Dormer, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield, to his Godson and Successor.* Edited from the originals, with a Memoir of Lord Chesterfield, by the Earl of Carnarvon. Second edition. Oxford. At the Clarendon Press. 1890.

of habitual ill-health, but often in the midst of severe distress and pain, that this work was carried on. It is gratifying to think that he lived to receive his reward. The high opinion which he had himself formed of the Letters was amply corroborated by the popular judgment. Very shortly after the appearance of the first edition of his work a second and cheaper edition was called for, and he had the satisfaction of feeling that, if his labours had not exactly added to the fame of Chesterfield, they had at least revived it. They had done more. They had furnished, as all allowed, conclusive testimony that the severe sentence so long popularly passed on the author of these Letters, as a man, needs considerable modification. They had placed his character in a light far more favourable than it had ever been placed in before. They had shown that, if in the traditionary estimate of him more than justice had been meted out to his defects and errors, less and much less than justice had been done to his shining qualities. No one who is acquainted with Chesterfield's later correspondence, his correspondence, for example, with Dayrolles and with the Bishop of Waterford, and who possesses any competent knowledge of his public and private life, could fail to see how erroneous, how ridiculously erroneous, would be any conception of his character formed merely from the impression made by certain portions of the correspondence with his son.

But the world has little leisure, and still less inclination, to concern itself about writings which are of interest only for the light which they throw on the

character of the writer, or to explore the by-paths of history and biography. To ninety-nine in every hundred of his countrymen Chesterfield is known only in association with the Letters to his son Philip. On the evidence of these Letters, or to speak more correctly, on evidence derived from portions of these Letters, confirmed and supplemented by current traditions, the popular conception of him has been formed. We have little doubt that in the imagination of thousands he is still pictured as the epigram of Johnson pictured him more than a century ago. We have little doubt that to many, and to very many, his name is little more than a synonym for a profligate fribble, shallow, flippant, heartless, without morality, without seriousness, a scoffer at religion, an enemy to truth and virtue, passing half his life in practising, and the other half in teaching a son to practise, all that moves loathing and contempt in honest men. Even among those who do not judge as the crowd judges there exists a stronger prejudice against Chesterfield than exists with equal reason against any other Englishman. He has himself remarked that there is no appeal against character. His own character has been established through the impression made by the testimony of hostile contemporaries, and through the impression made by such portions of the only writings by which he is now remembered as unhappily reflect it on its worst side, and appear therefore to corroborate that testimony. And his character, or what has for a century and a quarter been assumed to be his character, has been fatal to his fame. He will

now be judged more fairly. We do not think that the present Letters throw any really new light on the man himself, but, unlike the more famous Letters, they reflect only, and very charmingly, what was best and most attractive in him. They show how much amiability, kindliness, humanity, seriousness, existed in one whose name has become a proverb for the very opposite qualities. They exhibit, simply and without alloy, what he took a cynical pleasure in concealing from the world in general, and what is in his other writings obscured and vitiated by baser matter. That their publication will have the effect of creating a reaction in his favour, a reaction the result of which will be a juster estimate of the value of his writings, is highly probable. And we heartily hope that this will be the case. We have long regarded it as a great misfortune that what was reprehensible in Chesterfield's conduct and teaching should so completely have obscured what was excellent and admirable in both, as practically to deprive his name and works of all popular credit and authority.

With the exception of Machiavelli, we know of no other writer whose opinions and precepts have been so ridiculously misrepresented, and that, unfortunately for Chesterfield's fame, not merely by the multitude, but by men who are among the classics of our literature.

It is curious to follow the fortune of the volumes which have brought so much discredit on his name. From the moment of their appearance the outcry began. The sensation occasioned twenty years before

by the publication of Bolingbroke's philosophical works by Mallet was not greater than that occasioned when Eugenia Stanhope gave this famous Correspondence to the world. In the *Annual Register*, indeed, a notice, which from internal evidence we have little hesitation in ascribing to Burke, did full justice both to the merits of the Letters themselves and to the virtues of their distinguished author. But the storm burst in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. An ominous allusion to "the lurking poison of an artful and profligate father" heralded what was coming. In a few months the Letters were the general theme. The invective and ridicule which had been directed against Bolingbroke as the enemy of religion were now directed against Chesterfield as the enemy of morality. One writer in a parody of the Catechism, and another in a parody of the Creed, neither of them, in point of decency at least, very creditable to the cause in which they were presumably written, drew up a form of initiation for Chesterfieldian neophytes. But serious refutations "of this most pestilential work" soon made their appearance. And serious refutation on an elaborate plan began in 1776 with a Mr. William Crawford's *Remarks*. Much as we respect Mr. Crawford's intention, which was to protect religion and morality by putting the youth of England on their guard against the seductions of "the fascinating Earl," we are sorry to be obliged to say that Mr. Crawford is, in spite of all his efforts to the contrary, one of the most amusing writers we have ever met with. His remarks assume the form

of dialogue. Eugenius, an innocent youth, on being asked by his tutor Constantius about the books he has been reading in his holidays, replies that "one has fallen into his hand which has afforded him not a little entertainment and instruction." To the horror and distress of Constantius it turns out that the book in question was Chesterfield's Letters. There is now nothing for it but to administer the antidote to all this poison, and in eight dialogues it is done. While Mr. Crawford was opening the eyes of the younger generation, the Rev. Thomas Hunter, in a substantial octavo volume, was appealing to maturer judgments. "Britons, who are parents," writes this fervid moralist, "ask your own hearts whether you would wish your children to be educated on this plan? Would it please you to exchange the virtues for the graces, English honesty for French grimace?"—with much more of the same kind. But Hunter, who was by the way the author of a curious and singularly interesting treatise on Tacitus, is on the whole sensible and temperate, and does full justice to the literary merits of the Letters, as well as to such portions of their ethical teaching as do not offend his prejudices as a clergyman. But the most extraordinary production inspired by the Correspondence was Jackson Pratt's sensational novel, *The Pupil of Pleasure*, which appeared seven years after the books of which we have been speaking. The object of this work was to depict a character modelled on what Pratt conceived, or pretended to conceive, Chesterfield's ideal gentleman to be, and to

describe his career. When we say that Pratt has summed up Chesterfield's teachings as comprised mainly in these maxims, "Do whatever you think proper—whatever fancy, passion, whim, or wickedness suggest—only command your countenance and check your temper," it is scarcely necessary to observe that a more accurate summary of all that constitutes the exact reverse of what those teachings inculcate could hardly be drawn up in fewer words; as it is equally unnecessary to add that poor Pratt's "celebrated, dazzling, and diabolical hero," who, after ruining almost every woman he meets, and running into the extremes of vice and profligacy, is at last found dead with the precepts of his supposed Mentor in his pocket, bears about the same resemblance to Chesterfield's ideal gentleman as he bears to Zeno's Wise Man or Aristotle's Magnanimous Man. But these monstrous perversions of Chesterfield's teaching were not confined to ephemeral writings. In some of the most powerful lines which he ever composed, Cowper gave immortal expression to the popular estimate of the Letters :—

Petronius ! all the Muses weep for thee ;
But every tear shall scald thy memory ;
The Graces, too, while Virtue at their shrine
Lay bleeding under that soft hand of thine,
Felt each a mortal stab in her own breast,
Abhorr'd the sacrifice, and cursed the priest.
Thou polish'd and high-finish'd foe to truth,
Grey-beard corrupter of our list'ning youth,
To purge and skim away the filth of vice
That so refin'd, it might the more entice,
Then pour it on the morals of thy son,
To taint his heart, was worthy of thine own ;
Now, while the poison all high life invades,
Write, if thou canst, one letter from the Shades.

The publication of Boswell's *Life of Johnson* in 1791 confirmed and extended the impression made by preceding writers. And for this reason. For every person who remembers the one just thing which Johnson said of the Letters and the one just remark which he made about their author, there are a hundred who remember his terse and pointed, but gross and libellous, epigrams on both. The appearance of the *Posthumous Letters and Memoirs of Horace Walpole*, between 1818 and 1847, and the *Memoirs of Lord Hervey*, in both of which Chesterfield himself is depicted as personal enemies of such resources would be likely to paint him, contributed still further to bias the popular judgment. But the measure of Chesterfield's posthumous misfortunes was not yet full. What the author of *The Pupil of Pleasure* assayed to do in the last century, the author of *Barnaby Rudge* has assayed to do in our own time. On the unspeakable vulgarity and absurdity of Dickens's caricature and travesty—with pain do we say a disrespectful word of one to whom we in common with half the world are so much indebted—it would be superfluous to comment. But what is certain is that in the imagination of millions Chesterfield will exist, and exist only, in association with a character combining all that is worst, all that is most vile, most contemptible, most repulsive, in the traditionary portrait of him.

Of the recklessness with which charges have been brought against Chesterfield and his writings we will give one instance. He has been accused over

and over again of defending and encouraging the practice of falsehood. What is the fact? There is no vice which he represents as more odious or more unbecoming the character of a gentleman. "I really know nothing more criminal,"—so he writes in one letter to his son—"more mean and more ridiculous, than lying." Again: "It is not possible for a man to be virtuous without strict veracity; a lie in a man is a vice of the mind, and a vice of the heart." In another letter: "Lies and perfidy are the refuge of fools and cowards." Again: "Whoever has not truth cannot be supposed to have any one good quality, and must become the detestation of God and man." "*Mendacem si dixeris*," he writes in another place, adapting the well-known proverb about ingratitude, "*omnia dixeris*." But it is useless to multiply quotations in support of a cardinal principle in his teaching. The handle which he has afforded for this accusation is simply the fact that he has distinguished between the truths which should be told and the truths which ought not to be told; between dissimulation, which he defends, and simulation, which he brands as infamous. He goes no further than the saying attributed to Voltaire, "Woe is he who says all he can about anything"—a platitude in practice with all but fools—justly denouncing as immoral the theory defended by Bacon, and defended even by so virtuous a man as Sir Walter Scott.

The history of the Correspondence, now for the first time published, is soon told. In 1755 Chesterfield,

then far in the decline of life, stood godfather to a son born to a distant kinsman, Mr. Arthur Charles Stanhope, of Mansfield. He was naturally interested in the child, for in the event of his brother Sir William dying without issue, his godson, as heir to Mr. A. C. Stanhope, to whom on his own decease the title passed, would become his successor in the earldom. As the boy grew up, his education became the chief object of his godfather's life. The place that his son Philip had for so many years occupied in his thoughts and in his affections was now filled by this child. He watched over him with more than a mother's care. Every indication of character was anxiously observed. If any defect, however slight, in temper, in habits of mind, in gesture, in accent, was detected, neither master nor pupil knew peace till it was rectified. He submitted patiently to all the drudgery of correcting composition, of drawing up lists of words and idioms to be learnt by heart, of writing elementary sketches of ancient and modern history, of explaining mythology, of copying out elegant extracts in prose and poetry. As the lad's mind developed, and he became capable of receiving more serious instruction, the old statesman, in a series of Letters well worthy of a place beside the best of those by which he is now chiefly remembered, laboured to prepare him for the prominent part he would in all probability be called upon to play both in public and private life. These Letters were carefully preserved, and had been perused by Dr. Maty, who refers to them in his *Memoirs of Chesterfield*. "They have not yet appeared," says the

Doctor, "under any sanction of authority, but the principle of them is so noble, and the end proposed so becoming the dignity of a great name, that it is hoped they will not always be withheld from the public." It is curious that Maty should have made no reference to the fact that fourteen of these Letters—the Letters namely on the "Art of Pleasing"—numbers CXXIX. to CXLII. in Lord Carnarvon's edition—had already been printed, in a very incorrect and garbled form, and no doubt surreptitiously, in the *Edinburgh Magazine and Review* for February, March, April, and May 1774. Their appearance in this magazine accounts for their subsequent appearance in a Dublin reprint of the Earl's Letters to his son, among which they are erroneously classed, and for their reproduction in the supplementary volume to Maty's *Memoirs of Chesterfield*, published in 1778. How the Letters got into print it would be interesting to know: that they were pirated is certain, and we are very much inclined to agree with the writer of a preface to a subsequent edition of them, that the pirate was Dr. Dodd. With the exception of these fourteen Letters, the rest of the Correspondence remained in manuscript till Lord Carnarvon, in accordance with the wishes of the late Earl of Chesterfield, gave it to the world in the present volume.

With the Letters now for the first time published Lord Carnarvon has not only incorporated the Letters to which we have referred, but he has, in this second edition, very judiciously added Chesterfield's Correspondence with Mr. Arthur Charles Stanhope, his

godson's father, originally printed in 1817, as well as the admirable testamentary letter which was to be delivered to Philip Stanhope after the Earl's death, first printed by Lord Stanhope. To these Letters he has prefixed a scholarly and gracefully-written introduction, partly historical and partly biographical, sketching rapidly the course of political events during the first half of the eighteenth century, and recapitulating the chief incidents of Chesterfield's public career and private life. He has also added notes to the Letters themselves. An excellent Index, the work of Mr. Doble of the Clarendon Press, concludes the book.

In all that concerns adornment, the volume before us certainly leaves nothing to be desired. On the distinguished Press from which it has issued it reflects, indeed, the highest credit. The collotypes, particularly the portrait of Chesterfield fronting the title-page, the paper, and the type, are excellent; the facsimile letter is perfect. The binder might perhaps have been a little less profuse in heraldic insignia. It was no doubt quite in accordance with the becoming that the most aristocratic and fastidious of English writers should make his reappearance amongst us in an *édition de luxe*, but we all know how strongly Chesterfield objected to emphasis being laid on distinctions of the kind to which we refer. "Wear your title as if you had it not," he writes to Philip Stanhope, and no sentiment is more frequently repeated by him. As it is possible that this work may pass into another edition, and as it is certain that it will take its place among the works which every student

of English eighteenth-century literature will consider it his duty to read, we are sure we are doing nothing more than would have met with the approval—the cordial approval—of Lord Carnarvon himself, if we venture to point out what seem to us blemishes in his editorial work—the few errors which we should like to see corrected, the deficiencies—there are more of these—which we should like to see supplied.

The most unsatisfactory part of Lord Carnarvon's work is the commentary. He appears to have thought at first—and assuredly to have thought quite rightly—that it was his duty as an editor to explain Chesterfield's allusions, to trace his quotations, and to correct his errors. And this up to a certain point he has done. He then appears to have changed his mind. It is possible that he thought the insertion of notes at the bottom of the page had an unpleasantly pedantic appearance; and this seems probable from the fact that many of the quotations are left untraced at the foot of the text in which they occur, the reference, however, being tacitly given in the Index. This we discovered quite accidentally, and if it is discovered at all, every other reader must discover it in the same way, for there is nothing to indicate it. Thus, on page 198, the reference for a quotation from Ovid's *Fasti* is duly given at the foot of the page; but there is nothing to indicate the source of a quotation from the *Metamorphoses* on the same page. On turning, however, to the heading "Ovid" in the Index, we noticed that the reference is duly given. It is not very easy to see what possible end can be served by such capri-

cious inconsistencies as these, unless it be a device for disguising the fact that many of the quotations have not been traced at all, either at the foot of the page or in the Index—a subterfuge of which we are very sure Lord Carnarvon was quite incapable. In any case, this is a defect which needs remedy. If an editor undertakes to trace quotations, he ought of course to spare no pains to trace all, though he cannot be blamed if he is unsuccessful. But there is surely no reason why he should give the references to some at the bottom of the page, and relegate the references to others to the Index. The explanatory notes have the same peculiarity. Allusions for an explanation of which we should have been grateful are passed silently over; allusions so obvious that we should scarcely think it necessary to explain them to a fourth-form schoolboy, are explained at length. Thus, in commenting on a proverb so common as *Post est Occasio calva*, we are amazed to find the editor stopping to notice that Defoe has quoted it in one of his pamphlets, and that Chesterfield must have had in his mind five lines of Phædrus, which are transcribed at length. Two or three of Chesterfield's slips, at which we should have expected so accomplished a scholar as Lord Carnarvon to have winced, are passed unnoticed. Thus, on page 275, Chesterfield observes that "Cicero reproaches Clodia with dancing better than a modest woman should." He was of course thinking of what Sallust, not Cicero, said of Sempronia, not of Clodia.

The well-known saying, *Nemo fere saltat sobrius*,

twice misquoted by Chesterfield, occurs not, as is asserted (page 292), in the *Offices*, but in the *Pro Muræna*, cap. vi. On page 208 we have no doubt that in the famous couplet of Martial on Mutius Scævola (*Epig.* I. 21 (22))—

Major deceptæ fama est et gloria dextræ :
Si non errasset, fecerat illa minus—

illa is the right reading, but it is quite clear from Chesterfield's version that he read *ille*. We are surprised, too, that so accurate a scholar as Lord Carnarvon should have allowed another error to pass unnoticed, more especially as it has, in consequence of Chesterfield's authority, become so generally current that it may now be said to hold a conspicuous place among *pseudodoxia epidemica*. It is repeatedly asserted, both in these Letters and in the former series, that Socrates exhorted his disciples to sacrifice to the Graces. The saying has nothing whatever to do with Socrates. It was the advice given by Plato to Xenocrates simply on account of his pompous demeanour and sullen aspect ; and the anecdote is related by Plutarch in his *Life of Marius*, and by Diogenes Laertius in his notice of Xenocrates. The phrase appears afterwards to have become proverbial.¹ But nothing has surprised us so much as that Lord Carnarvon should have allowed the following passage to stand without a note :—

Voicy une jolie epigramme faite par le célèbre Cardinal du Perron, sur une belle dame qui avoit un enfant d'une beauté égale à la sienne, mais ils étoient tous deux borgnes—

¹ See the notes of Casaubon and Ménage on Diogenes Laertius, iv. 11.

Parve puer, quod habes lumen concede parenti ;
Sic tu cæcus Amor, sic erit illa Venus.

We need scarcely say that the original runs thus :—

Lumine Acon dextro, capta est Leonilla sinistro,
Et potis est formâ vincere uterque Deos.
Blande puer, lumen quod habes concede sorori :
Sic tu cæcus Amor, sic erit illa Venus.

Whether there is any authority for saying that it refers to the Princess Eboli, the mistress of Philip II. of Spain, or to Maugiron, the favourite of Henry III. of France, each of whom is said to have lost an eye, we do not know. But it was certainly not written by the Cardinal du Perron, for it was published thirty years before the Cardinal was born, though it has often been attributed to him, as it has been attributed also to Ménage. It was written by Girolamo Amalteo, and will be found in any of the editions of the *Trium Fratrum Amaltheorum Carmina*, under the title of “De gemellis, fratre et sorore, luscis.” We are surprised that neither Chesterfield nor Lord Carnarvon appears to have known the origin of the Italian phrase so often quoted, not only in these Letters but generally—*volto sciolto, pensieri stretti*, though it is to be found in Wotton’s letter to Milton prefixed to some of the editions of *Comus*, where it is attributed to one Alberto Scipione.

The passage in Boileau referred to on page 158 will be found in the eighth Satire, line 99. On page 197 there is evidently a reference to Longinus (*De Subl.* c. ix.). The words “Facere digna scribi vel scribere digna legi,” quoted on page 164 and again on page

217, are obviously a reminiscence of a passage in the Letters of the younger Pliny. "Equidem beatos puto, quibus Deorum munere datum est aut facere scribenda, aut scribere legenda" (*Epist.* lib. vi. ep. xvi.).

The fine lines quoted from Voltaire—

Répandez vos bienfaits, avec magnificence.
Même aux moins vertueux, ne les refusez pas.
Ne vous informez pas de leur reconnaissance ;
Il est grand, il est beau, de faire des ingrats—

are from the *Précis de L'Ecclesiaste*, and from the same poem are the lines quoted on page 11. The words in the last letter, "You would fall like setting stars to rise no more," are the adaptation of a line in Rowe's *Jane Shore* (Act i. Sc. 2)—

She sets like stars that fall to rise no more.

We hope that, if these Letters are republished, the references made to contemporary plays will be traced. In what play, for example, does the character of John Trott, known to us from Goldsmith's epigram, and alluded to over and over again by Chesterfield, appear? Who was "Nell Jobson the Cobler's wife in the comical transformation" (page 244)? To most readers of the present day it would certainly not have been superfluous to explain that the author of *Tamerlane*, of which an account is given in Letter cxxiv., was Nicholas Rowe.

For the Introduction we have little but praise. On three points, and on three points only, are we inclined to dissent from Lord Carnarvon's conclusions. We cannot at all agree with him that Chesterfield's "respectable Hottentot" was intended for Johnson.

We think that Dr. Birkbeck Hill has conclusively shown that such was not the case. To say nothing of Johnson's assertion that Chesterfield had never seen him eat in his life, there seems little doubt that the person who sat for that picture was the person who is described in the 122nd and 170th of the earlier Letters, and who may possibly be alluded to in the 30th Letter of volume i., all of which prove that he must have been some one moving in Chesterfield's circle, one of which proves that the initial letter of his name was L. It is of course possible that the four passages may not refer to the same person ; if they do, there can be no reasonable doubt of the correctness of Dr. Hill's conjecture that the Hottentot was Lyttelton, a man whose slovenliness, awkwardness, and absence of mind were proverbial among his contemporaries. On page xxxviii. there is the following note : " Lord Chesterfield also offended Smollett ; but Smollett's day and literary influence are of the past, and it is scarcely worth while, except as an historical fact, to mention the circumstance." In this extraordinary estimate of Smollett's work and fame Lord Carnarvon will probably stand as much alone at the end of the thirtieth century as he stands at the end of the nineteenth. It is surprising that he did not remember the very different opinion formed of Smollett's merits by judges so competent as Sir Walter Scott, Thackeray, and Dickens, or, remembering, should have thought himself justified in setting it so unceremoniously aside. But on matters of this kind dispute is useless, and it is not with the object of discussing Lord Car-

narvon's paradoxical verdict that we have drawn attention to the passage. What perplexes us is the allusion to a fact which is altogether new to us. When did Lord Chesterfield offend Smollett? and what authority is there for ranking Smollett with Horace Walpole, Lord Hervey, and Dr. Johnson among Chesterfield's enemies? They were certainly on good terms in 1747, for in *Reproof* Smollett addresses Chesterfield in terms of exaggerated flattery :—

Nor would th' enamour'd Muse neglect to pay
To Stanhope's worth the tributary lay,
The soul unstain'd, the sense sublime, to paint
A people's patron, pride, and ornament,
Did not his virtues eterniz'd remain
The boasted theme of Pope's immortal strain.

Again, later, in 1757, Smollett in his *History of England* twice takes occasion to pay Chesterfield the highest compliments, once in allusion to his ambassadorship at the Hague (vol. x. p. 336), and once (vol. xi. p. 9) in allusion to his speech on the Play House Bill. But what seems to make the correctness of Lord Carnarvon's statement the more improbable is the absence of any satirical portrait of the Earl among the portraits sketched in *The Adventures of an Atom*. Many of Chesterfield's friends and former colleagues are there, but the most conspicuous figure in the fashionable life of those days is correspondingly conspicuous by his absence in Smollett's malicious panorama. Had Smollett borne Chesterfield the smallest ill-will, he would—of that we may be sure—have availed himself of this opportunity of indulging his

spleen. It is possible that Lord Carnarvon may have had authority for his statement ; we wish he had adduced it. We are half inclined to think that he had for the moment confounded Chesterfield with Newcastle or Lyttelton.

But these things are trifles. We concur with Lord Carnarvon in thinking that these Letters give us on the whole a more favourable impression of Chesterfield as a man than the Letters addressed to his son. Of the world, worldly, as all he writes is, a higher note is occasionally struck. The standard of aim and action is not, as in the former Correspondence, fixed immovably on the dead-level of purely mundane utility. The old cynicism and the old misogyny are still apparent ; but they are tempered with a gentle and kindly humour, which deprives them of all harshness, and even invests them with charm. There is the same solicitude about what a more exalted philosophy than he professed would regard with indifference, but there is not the same solicitude about what such a philosophy would directly condemn. Of the levity of tone and profligacy of sentiment in relation to certain subjects, which jar on us so much in the former Correspondence, there are few or no traces. He so abhorred everything which savours of cant, and especially of theological cant, that he seldom touches on religious subjects. But he does so sometimes, and that with an earnestness which will surprise every one who knows him only as people in general know him. There are two passages in his Letters to the Bishop of Waterford—one dated about

a year and a half before the date of the first Letter in this series, the other dated a month later—which give us, as it were, the key to all that distinguishes the Chesterfield of the earlier Correspondence from the Chesterfield of the later.

I consider life as one who is wholly unconcerned in it, and even when I reflect back upon what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done myself, I can hardly persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry and bustle, and pleasures of the world, had any reality, but they seem to have been the dreams of restless nights. This philosophy, however, I thank God, neither makes me sour nor melancholic; I see the folly and absurdity of mankind without indignation or peevishness; I pity the weak and the wicked without envying the wise and the good, but endeavouring to the utmost of my ability to be of that minority.

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I know I am tottering upon the brink of this world, and my thoughts are employed about the other. However, while I crawl upon this planet I think myself obliged to do what good I can in my narrow domestic sphere to my fellow-creatures, and to wish them all the good I cannot do (*Stanhope, Works*, vol. iv. pp. 329, 330).

It is the reflection of all this, of this mingled sadness and cheerfulness, good sense and good temper, mild wisdom and wise mildness, which is perhaps the chief attraction of these Letters. The voice which is speaking is, we feel, the voice of one without faith and with little hope, but at peace with himself and at peace with the world, grateful to Nature for having called him into life, and to Philosophy for having taught him how to live. Much experience and reflection had enabled him to estimate at its true value what it is in the power of man to attain and enjoy. He had reckoned with existence and struck the balance. The

delusions of the brute and the fool had never misguided or perplexed him: to the visions of the transcendentalist he was constitutionally blind, but he had found the secret which had escaped equally the ascetic and the sensualist—the art of living, the true use of fortune. He knew how little of what constitutes human happiness and contentment depends on man's mere capacities and externals; he knew of how much which constitutes both they may be made the means. To his refined good sense the extinction of existence was preferable to its abuse, was preferable even to its misuse. Like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, to whom in constitution and temper he bore in some respects a singular resemblance, he was a philosopher even in his affections.¹ “My only wish is,” he wrote to his son, “to have you fit to live, which if you are not, I do not desire that you should live at all.” “May you live,” he writes in another letter full of fatherly tenderness, “as long as you are fit to live, but no longer, or, may you rather die before you cease to be fit to live, than after.”

To this object he had directed the Correspondence with his son, to this object he directed the Corre-

¹ It is remarkable that they both speak in precisely the same way about natural affection. “My anxiety and care can only be the effects of that tender affection which I have for you, and which you cannot represent to yourself greater than it really is. But do not mistake the nature of that affection. It is not natural affection, there being in reality no such thing” (*Letters to Son*, cii. vol. i.). “You are no more obliged to me for bringing you into the world,” writes Lady Mary to her daughter, “than I am to you for coming into it, and I never made use of that commonplace (and like most commonplace, false) argument, as exacting any return of affection”; and then she goes on to say that what has formed the close bond of love between them has been the mutual interchange of what should unite reasonable beings (*To the Countess of Bute: Works*, vol. iv. p. 61).

spondence with his godson,—“to fit them to live.” That many of his particular precepts and particular aims would have found more favour with Atticus and Horace than with St. Paul and Christian moralists, may be fully conceded. We cannot see, as Lord Carnarvon appears to do, any indication in this later Correspondence, that Chesterfield’s religious opinions had in the smallest respect changed, still less that old age and its afflictions had “led him to a somewhat different estimate of right and wrong from that which he once professed.” There is nothing in the essential teaching of these Letters which will not be found in the Letters to his son. On the subject of religion his language and sentiments are always the same. It is the basis on which life rests. Serious regard for it is the hypothesis on which moral instruction proceeds. Indifference to it, or the expression of indifference to it, is the certain mark of a fool. In whatever form it finds embodiment it is to be respected. Without religion virtue is without its strongest collateral security.¹ To the *esprits forts*, Freethinkers and Moral Philosophers, as they called themselves, Bishop Butler himself was not more sensitively hostile. That Chesterfield did not accept Revelation seems certain. His religion probably differed in no essential respects from the religion of Cicero and Bolingbroke, of

¹ See *Letters to his Son*, *passim*. In Letter CLXXX. he explains his reason for not writing at length on the subject of religion. “I have seldom written to you upon the subject of religion and morality; your own reason, I am persuaded, has given you true notions of both; they speak best for themselves, but if they wanted assistance you have Mr. Harte at hand” (young Stanhope’s tutor and a clergyman), “both for precept and example.” See, too, Letter CLXVIII.

Socrates and Voltaire. Of the moral government of the universe; of the wisdom, justice, and benevolence of the Deity; of the fact that in reason, or, as it is sometimes expressed, in conscience, God has furnished man with an unerring guide; of the essential connection of religion with morality—he has no doubt. To the belief in a future state he leaned so strongly that he has not scrupled to assume it as truth. His attitude towards the popular creed was precisely that generally assumed by the wise and serious men of the last century. His heterodoxy, which we know was shared by almost every member of Pope's circle, and by many members of Johnson's circle, was, like theirs, purely esoteric. Pope's distress at the imputation of unorthodoxy is notorious. Swift was pained beyond expression by the construction placed on *The Tale of a Tub*. The publication of Bolingbroke's philosophical works was an act of gross treachery. When it was objected to Middleton that his writings would have the effect of disseminating scepticism, he replied that he would recant everything in them which could be construed in a sense hostile to Christianity. Gibbon thought his indiscretion in giving his two famous chapters to the world sufficiently expiated by the advances made to him by the author of *The Corruptions of Christianity*. "I have sometimes thought," he says in his Autobiography, "of writing a *Dialogue of the Dead*, in which Lucian, Erasmus, and Voltaire should mutually acknowledge the danger of exposing a popular creed to the contempt of the blind and fanatic multitude." Like

Cotta in Cicero's Dialogue, they respected a religion which was the religion of the State. Like Aristotle's Man of Polite Wit, they shrank from wounding unnecessarily the feelings of others. On higher grounds they revered it as the purest and most perfect of moral codes, and as the expression of essential truths appealing equally to the philosopher and to the multitude, but appealing to the philosopher through what was mystery to the multitude, and appealing to the multitude through what was fable to the philosopher. Wherever Chesterfield refers to Christianity it is with the greatest reverence. The education both of his son and of his godson was conducted on principles strictly orthodox. Their tutors were clergymen of the Established Church. One, recommended by Lyttelton, was a man of distinguished piety; the other, recommended by the Bishop of St. David's, was the most eloquent preacher in England. In the earlier and later Correspondence all Chesterfield's instruction proceeds on the assumption that these gentlemen "are doing their duty." So anxious was he that the impressions his son received from their teaching should not be weakened, that when Bolingbroke's philosophical works came out he expressed a wish that he would not read them. Of Voltaire's profanity he speaks with the strongest disapprobation. So conservative was he that we find him thus writing to Crébillon: "*Je doute fort s'il est permis à un homme d'écrire contre le culte et la croyance de son pays, quand même il seroit de bonne foi persuadé qu'il y eût des*

erreurs.”¹ In writing to his godson he says, referring to the Bible, “You will and ought to believe every word of it, as it was dictated by the Spirit of Truth,” a statement defining with singular precision Chesterfield’s real position in relation to these questions. As a man and as a writer he was the reversed counterpart of Montaigne and Shaftesbury. Montaigne thought the composition of the *Apologie de Raimond Sebond*, and Shaftesbury the composition of the *Characteristics*, perfectly compatible with the profession of orthodoxy. Chesterfield thought the inculcation of orthodoxy perfectly compatible with a belief in a philosophy not very different from the philosophy of the *Apologie* and the *Characteristics*.

Lord Carnarvon’s remark that Chesterfield’s “estimate of right and wrong” differed, and differed for the better, from the estimate which he had formed before he grew old, is, we venture to think, not quite just to him. For what the remark obviously implies is that the morality in the earlier Correspondence is either less sound or less elevated than that in the later. But this is surely not the case, and for the best of reasons. If we except the one great blot, of which we propose to speak at length presently, no moral teaching could be sounder or more excellent than we find in his Letters to his son. Religious obligations are perhaps a little more emphasised, but nothing is said but what had been said before. Whether Chesterfield’s opinion changed on the subject to which we have referred we do not know. We should infer

¹ Maty, *Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 327.

from Letters CCXVIII., CCXXXVI., and from the letter to be delivered after his death, that it had not.¹ In any case he would not have been likely to touch on such things in writing to a child.

We have dwelt on these points for two reasons. In the first place, we do not think that the distinction which Lord Carnarvon attempts to make between Chesterfield's sentiments and precepts in the earlier and later Letters is warranted by facts. In the second place, the suggestion of such a distinction involves an admission, in our opinion, equally unwarrantable and equally misleading. It is plain that Lord Carnarvon wishes to say all that can in fairness be said in defence of his author. But he defends him by a compromise. Assuming the justice of the popular verdict on the earlier Letters, he represents, or seems to represent, the later as a kind of palinode. He points to passages, in many cases simple repetitions of passages in the former series, as proofs of an awakened moral sense. He quotes, with just admiration, sentiments and precepts, which are commonplaces in the earlier Letters, as indications of the salutary effects of age and sorrow. But Chesterfield was not, we submit, a reformed rake, except in the sense in which Aristippus and Horace

¹ Lord Carnarvon points with great satisfaction to a passage in Letter XLIV., where Chesterfield speaks of natural children as *le fruit d'un péché*, as a proof of reformation on this point. But Chesterfield's repetition of the story of the Ephesian matron, and his remarks in Letter CXXXIV., are ominous indications. We very much fear that if Philip Stanhope had been a few years older he would have received the same edifying guidance in "the pleasures and dissipation, both of which I shall allow you when you are seventeen or eighteen," as the former Philip had been favoured with.

were reformed rakes. He was a man of the world and a philosopher, consistent alike in his precepts and in his principles. What he preached at seventy was what he preached at fifty-seven, and what he preached at fifty-seven is what he would have preached at five-and-thirty. Of the follies and errors of his youth, of wasted opportunities, and of wasted time, he speaks with a regret common with men in all ages of the world. But the *lusus ac ludicra*, the inculcation of which has been so fatal to his reputation among his countrymen, were no more included in his remorse than they were included in the remorse of Horace. "I do not regret," he wrote to his son, "the time that I passed in pleasures; they were seasonable, they were the pleasures of youth, and I enjoyed them while young." On this point his sentiments were precisely those of the ancient moralists.¹ The licence which was allowed to youth, a proper sense of the becoming forbade to mature years. *Non lusisse pudet sed non incidere ludum*. The danger, as he well knew and has frequently remarked, lay in the possibility of the permanent corruption of character; of the contamination, the essential contamination, of moral and intellectual energy; of mischief alike to body and mind. As he did not, in accordance with those who thought with the ancients rather than with those who think with Christian teachers, press an austere morality on the young, so he saw no impropriety

¹ See particularly Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, *passim*, and especially chap. xii., if sentiments, which are commonplaces with the ancients, need illustration.

in endeavouring to render such indulgences as little harmful as possible.¹ It is untrue, or, to speak more correctly, it is misleading, to say that he inculcates vice. The odiousness, the contemptibleness, the mischievousness of vice, is indeed his constant theme. “A *commerce galant* insensibly formed with a woman of fashion, a glass of wine or two too much, unwarily taken in the warmth and joy of good company, or some innocent frolic by which nobody is injured, are,” he says, “the utmost bounds which a man of sense and decency will allow himself; those who transgress them become infamous, or at least contemptible.” It must be remembered that when he speaks of gallantry, he is speaking not of that crime which ruins the peace of families, and is fraught with misery and mischief to society, but of a relation which, in the aristocratic circles of Italy and France, where his son, for whose guidance while moving in these circles the Letters were written, was then residing, no one held to be reprehensible. It was vice so sanctioned by custom that it had ceased to be regarded as vice. “Il permet la galanterie,” says Montesquieu, speaking of the differences between Monarchy and Republicanism—“lorsqu’elle est unie à l’idée du sentiment du cœur, ou à l’idée de con-

¹ His position and motives are exactly explained in the Testamentary Letter to his godson. Speaking of youth, he says, “It is a state of continual inebriety for six or seven years at least, and frequently attended by fatal and permanent consequences both to body and mind. Believe yourself, then, to be drunk, and as drunken men when reeling catch hold of the next thing in their way to support them, do you, my dear boy, hold by the rails of my experience. I hope they will hinder you from falling, though perhaps not from staggering a little sometimes.” He says exactly the same in Letter cxxxv. (vol. i.) to his son.

quête"; or, as Chesterfield himself puts it, "gallantry is at Paris as necessary a part of a woman of fashion's establishment as her house, table, and coach." We very much doubt, corrupt as the court of George II. was, whether he would have proffered any such advice, seriously at least, had his son been in England. Of one thing we are very sure, that crimes such as those of Wendoll and Lovelace would have been discountenanced and denounced by him as uncompromisingly and sternly as by the most austere of moralists.

We are holding no brief for Chesterfield. We think that any attempt to confuse the distinction between morality and immorality is in the highest degree reprehensible, and that, in theory at least, our standard of morals is, and must be, the standard of Christianity. That vice loses half its evil by losing all its grossness is in point of fact undoubtedly true, but it is true on a principle which we have no right to concede. Here, then, we believe Chesterfield to be entirely in the wrong. Nor have we anything to say in defence of the flippancy and levity with which he commonly speaks of women, and of men's relation to women, still less of the impropriety of a father addressing a son on such topics as those to which we have alluded. All this we fully grant and greatly regret. But it is surely high time that the nonsense which has so long been current, and is still so industriously circulated about these Letters and their author, should cease. We saw quite recently a work in which all the old calumnies, Johnson's epigram and Cowper's invective duly emphasised, were faith-

fully retailed. Chesterfield himself was described exactly as he is represented in his supposed counterpart in Dickens's novel, the Letters as a sort of text-book of the ethics of immorality, advocating seduction, adultery, hypocrisy, untruth, contempt for religion. Lord Carnarvon has done a great service in printing these new Letters. But he would have done a still greater service had he taken this opportunity of directing attention to the injustice of the sentence passed on the old. As it is, what he has said, or at least implied, will, we fear, tend only to confirm it. Chesterfield's character and writings are best vindicated by the statement of simple truth. On certain subjects he did not think as most men now think; there are certain passages in his works to which just exception may be taken. But to represent him, as Lord Carnarvon has done, in the light of a repentant sinner involves two wholly unwarranted *petitiones principii*, the one conceding far too much, the other assuming much too little. If he was a sinner, he was a sinner in a sense in which he did not repent; and if he repented, he repented in a sense in which he did not sin.

But to turn to the new Letters. They have much merit. They are full of good things, of observations on men and life marked by all the old delicate discrimination and refined good sense, of excellent precepts, of counsel and suggestions, admirable alike for the shrewd, keen, sober sagacity and wisdom displayed in them, and for the tact and urbanity with which they are tendered. There are passages in

them as good as the best which could be found in the earlier Correspondence. The style is the same—unaffected, fluent, pure, graceful, finished, the style in fact in which Chesterfield always wrote. But they have more humour, and the humour is less cynical and more playful. This, and that in which this is an element, the general tone, the reflection of the *mitis senectutis sapientia*, give them a charm, a peculiar charm, which the others do not possess. Horace, when he composed the *Epistles*, was, it is true, younger than Chesterfield when the Letters to the elder Stanhope were written, yet when we compare the tone of the earlier Letters with that of the Letters before us, we are insensibly reminded of the difference between the harsher philosopher of the *Satires* and the mellow philosopher of the *Epistles*. But they will not, as a whole, bear comparison with the earlier Correspondence. We doubt even whether they will add much to Chesterfield's literary fame. For, as they were designed with the same object as their predecessors, to form a system of education proceeding on the same method and having in view the same ends, they necessarily repeat much of what had been said before. Indeed, in substance they contain little which is essentially new. But what is repeated is repeated in another way, with many new touches, with many additional illustrations and reflections—with all those improvements, in short, which we should expect from a man of a richly-stored mind rediscussing in old age the subjects he had discussed years before.

The parallel between the two series is very close. The common aim of both was, like that of Elyot's *Governour*, with which they may be compared, the education of a finished gentleman, destined to serve his country in public life, commencing from the time when he leaves the nursery to the time when, epopt and perfect, he emerges from tutelage. "I had," he writes to his son, "two views in your education, Parliament and Foreign Affairs." In his godson he was interested as in his own heir and successor. Both series are exactly on the same plan, but the one is completed, the other is not. The earlier Letters, till they cease to be didactic, form three distinct groups. The first may be said to terminate with the 78th Letter, when Philip was in his fifteenth year, and the instruction here is confined almost entirely to elementary lessons in mythology, history, historical geography, and literature, and to the conduct of habits and manners proper in a boy. The second terminates at or about the second Letter of volume ii., that dated 26th April 1750, when the youth, now in his nineteenth year, was about to be independent of his tutor. Their theme is the true use of the world, and of books as instruments of culture; the becoming in morals and manners, and the art of acquiring it; duties, their nature and their obligations; ambition and its legitimate objects; the relation of theory to experience, of experience to theory, and of both to success in life. The third group, addressed to a youth who was now his own master and in the midst of all the temptations of the idlest and most

dissolute capital in Europe, completes the course. The instruction here is how the pleasures of a man of the world may be made subservient to his interests and his duties ; how credit, how influence, how authority are to be acquired ; how on the skill with which the game of life is played in trifles depends the success with which the game will be won in earnest. In the Letters to the godson, two only of these groups have their counterpart, for the simple reason that the Correspondence breaks off before young Stanhope had ceased to be a boy. The first, extending to the 128th Letter, answers exactly to the first group in the former. The series go over precisely the same ground, not indeed so deliberately and in a much lighter and more playful style, interspersing, more frequently than the others do, the sort of moral and religious instruction proper for a child. Indeed, there is much in this group which in the former series finds its place in the second. But it is expressed in simpler language, and generally in French. As these Letters will probably be new to most of our readers, we will give a few extracts. One of the most pleasing is the ninth, on duty to God and duty to man.

God has been so good as to write in all our hearts the duty that He expects from us, which is adoration and thanksgiving, and doing all the good we can to our fellow-creatures. Our conscience, if we will but consult and attend to it, never fails to remind us of those duties. . . . You owe all the advantages you enjoy to God, who can and who will probably take them away, whenever you are ungrateful to Him, for He has justice as well as mercy. Your duty to man is very short and clear ; it is only to do to him whatever you would be willing that he should do to you. And remember in all the business of life to ask your conscience this question : *Should I be willing that this should be*

done to me? If your conscience, which will always tell you truth, answers No, do not do that thing. Observe these rules, and you will be happy in this world and still happier in the next.

We notice in the next Letter the repetition of what he had said so felicitously before of the art of pleasing : “Observe attentively what pleases you in others and do the same, and you will be sure to please them.” There is a beautiful passage in the 108th Letter :—

God has created us such helpless creatures that we all want one another's assistance. . . . It was for this reason that our Almighty Creator made us with so many wants and infirmities that mutual help and assistance are absolutely necessary, not only for our well-being, but for our being at all. The Christian Religion carries our moral duties to greater perfection, and orders us to love our enemies, and to do good to those who use us ill. Now as love or hate is not in our power, though our actions are, this commandment means no more than that we should forgive those who use us ill, and that instead of resenting or revenging injuries, we should return good for evil.

How admirable too are his remarks in the 125th Letter, in which he comments on the folly of glorying in distinctions originating only from the accidents of fortune :—

Sçavez-vous qui sont vos supérieurs, vos égaux, et vos inférieurs ? Expliquons un peu cela. Vos supérieurs sont ceux à qui la fortune a donné beaucoup plus de rang et de richesses qu'à vous. Vos égaux sont ce qui s'appelle Gentilhommes, ou honnêtes gens. Et vos inférieurs sont ceux à qui la fortune a refusé tout rang et tout bien, sans souvent qu'il y ait de leur faute, et qui sont obligés de travailler pour gagner leur vie. Selon la nature la servante de Monsieur Robert est aussi bien née que vous, elle a eu un Père et une Mère, un Grandpère et une Grandmère et des ancêtres jusqu'Adam : mais malheureusement pour elle, ils n'ont pas été si riches que les vôtres et par conséquent n'ont pu lui donner une éducation comme la vôtre.

Et voilà toute la difference entre elle et vous, elle vous donne son travail, et vous lui donnez de l'argent.¹

The Letters comprised in the second group are represented by the fourteen (129-142) on the Duty, Utility, and Means of Pleasing; by thirteen designed "to cram you full of the most shining thoughts of the Ancients and Moderns." After this the Letters, as a series, go to pieces, and are in the main repetitions of what had been said in Letters 129-140, or merely gossiping trifles. The Letters on the Art of Pleasing are the only ones in this group which stand on the same level as the earlier Correspondence. Some of the others appear to us to show evident traces of senility. The same remarks are repeated over and over again. The story of Dido, with the wretched epigrams on her death, is twice narrated, so also is the trash of Atterbury about Flavia's fan. The selection of "the most shining thoughts of the Ancients and Moderns" is worthy of Ned Softly himself, and in some cases the comments too. We think Lord Carnarvon would, here at least, have done well had he exercised a little less indulgently his discretion as an editor.

But to turn to Chesterfield's own "shining passages." The shrewd good sense of such remarks as these will be at once apparent:—

Vanity is a great inducement to keep low company, for a man of quality is sure to be the first man in it, and to be

¹ These sentiments find an interesting illustration in his Will: "I give to all my menial or household servants that shall have lived with me five years or upwards, whom I consider as unfortunate friends, my equals by nature and my inferiors only by the difference of our fortune, two years' wages," etc. See his Will, printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for July 1773.

admired and flattered, though perhaps the greatest fool in it.—
Letter CXXXIV.

Again, on the same subject :—

I know of nothing more difficult in common behaviour than to fix due bounds to familiarity ; too little implies an unsociable formality, too much destroys all friendly and social intercourse. The best rule I can give you to manage familiarity is never to be more familiar with anybody than you would be willing and even glad that he should be with you.—CXIII.

The remarks about wit are excellent :—

If you have real wit it will flow spontaneously, and you need not aim at it, for in that case the rule of the gospel is reversed, and it will prove, seek and you shall *not* find. Wit is so shining a quality that everybody admires it, most people aim at it, all people fear it, and few love it except in themselves. . . . A wise man will live as much within his wit as within his income.—CXXXVI.

La Rochefoucauld himself has nothing better than this remark on vanity :—

Vanity is the more odious and shocking to everybody, because everybody without exception has vanity ; and two vanities can never love one another, any more than, according to the vulgar saying, two of a trade can. If you desire to please universally men and women, address yourself to their passions and weaknesses, gain their hearts, and then let their reason do their worst against you.—CXLI.

How fine and exquisite, with the precision and subtilty of La Bruyère at his best, is this :—

Judgment is not upon all occasions required, but discretion always is. Never affect or assume a particular character, for it will never fit you, but will probably give you a ridicule, but leave it to your conduct, your virtues, your morals, and your manners to give you one. Discretion will teach you to have particular attention to your *mœurs*, which we have no one word in our language to express exactly. Morals are too much, manners too little, decency comes the nearest to it, though rather short of it.—CXLIH.

Well worth pausing over are remarks like these :—

There is as much difference between Pride and Dignity as there is between Power and Authority.—CXCVI.

A vicious character may and will alter if there is good sense at bottom, but a frivolous one is condemned to eternal ridicule and contempt.—CCXXXV.

A certain degree of ceremony is a necessary outwork of manners as well as of religion.—CXXXI.

Il faut l'avouer il y a des coutumes bien ridicules qui ont été inventées par des sots, mais auxquelles les sages sont obligés de se conformer.—CCVI.

The literary fame of Chesterfield must rest on the Letters to his son ; but to these Letters about a third of what is comprised in the present volume is well worthy of being added, and is indeed a substantial contribution to the work by which he will be remembered.

Nothing is so natural, but assuredly nothing is so delusive, as the desire to make others wise—wise vicariously, with the wisdom of experience. It is perhaps the last illusion of old age. But it is an illusion for which the world has reason to be thankful. Generation after generation have men, whose profound acquaintance with human nature and human affairs would make even their slightest reflections precious, devoted their leisure or their decline to summing up, for the benefit of those dear to them, the lessons which life had taught them. Such was the occupation of the leisure of Cato the Censor, and of our own Alfred. The letters of the elder Wyatt to the younger are in our opinion of more interest than the poems to which he owes his fame. Thus too we have the instructions drawn up by Lord Burleigh for

the guidance of his son Robert, and excellent they are—so excellent and so characteristic of their eminent author, that we wonder they have not been reprinted in our own time. Of Raleigh's voluminous writings the advice to his son, or, as he entitles it, *Instructions to his Son and to Posterity*, is one of the few which still maintains its interest. The only work of James I. which deserves to be remembered is the *Basilicon Doron*. Cardinal Sermonetta's *Instructions to his Cousin*, and the manual attributed to Walsingham—not the minister of Elizabeth, but the secretary to Lord Digby—are perhaps more curious than important; but Francis Osborn's *Advice to a Son* is a work which deserves a better fate than oblivion. Nothing that Chesterfield's own ancestor, George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, has left us—and he has left us two essays which are masterpieces—is comparable to his *Advice to a Daughter*, a little manual which ought not only to be reprinted, but to be placed in the hands of every young lady in England. Coming down more nearly to Chesterfield's time, we have the letters written by Lord Chatham to his nephew at Cambridge, and it is curious to note how close a resemblance, so far as direct instruction is concerned, they bear to Chesterfield's letters. There is the same insistence throughout on religion and morality being the pillars on which life rests; on the necessity of a sound, as distinguished from a pedantic, classical training forming the basis of literary culture; on the fact that the use of learning "is to render a man more wise and virtuous, not merely more learned";

on the importance of the study of modern history and modern languages in conjunction with ancient. Among the many minor coincidences two are well worth noticing. Perhaps nothing has been more ridiculed in Chesterfield than his remarks about the ungracefulness of laughter. But Chatham has made exactly the same remarks : "Avoid contracting any peculiar gesticulations of the body, or movements of the muscles of the face. It is rare to see in any one a graceful laughter ; it is generally better to smile than to laugh out."¹ Both indeed were but repeating what had been said before by Plato, Isocrates, Cicero, and Epictetus.² No one will accuse Lord Chatham of any sympathy with lax morality ; but, unless we misunderstand a passage in one of his Letters, he thought there was nothing indecorous in banter quite indistinguishable from Chesterfield's.³

But no serious comparison can be drawn between these Letters and the Letters of which we are speaking. Interesting and valuable as the greater portion of them are, the best of them have no pretensions to be classical. In their matter there is an immense preponderance of what is only not platitude because of the authority that enforces it. In none of them is there any attempt at a regular system of instruction. They are simply didactic, and didactic in the sense of being, as a rule, simply admonitory. In point of

¹ *Letters written by the late Earl of Chatham to his nephew Thomas Pitt*, Letter v. p. 34.

² *Republic*, vol. iii. p. 338 ; *Ad Demonicum*, 15 ; *De Officiis*, lib. i. 29 ; *Enchiridion*, cap. xxx. 4.

³ Chatham's *Letters*, xix. p. 92.

style, the great criterion, they are all essentially deficient, and that for various reasons and in various degrees.

The unpopularity of Chesterfield among his countrymen is not difficult to understand. In the first place, he is the most aristocratic of writers. He wrote, to employ his own words, not for "the herd of mankind, who, though useful in their way, are but the candle-snuffers and scene-shifters of the universal theatre," but for "those whom Nature, education, and industry have qualified to act the great parts." It ought always to be remembered, and is almost always forgotten, that these Letters were not intended for publication. They were neither addressed to the multitude nor have any application to the multitude. They were designed for the guidance of a young English aristocrat. They have therefore to ordinary men, who regard them as addressed to the world in general, all the irritating effect of a continued strain of irony. Neither writer nor reader, or, to speak more correctly, neither teacher nor pupil, understands the other. The teacher is assuming that the pupil is moving in a sphere in which fortune has not placed him, and the pupil insensibly takes the assumption for a satire on the sphere in which fortune has placed him. He is perpetually being admonished to become something which he can never be, and warned against becoming what in truth he cannot help being. In the amusements, in the serious occupations, in the aims for the guidance of which instruction is being given, his own

appear to be superciliously ignored, or made to seem contemptible by contrast. Few men care to be reminded, honourable as such occupations may be, that they belong to "the candle-snuffers and scene-shifters of the universal theatre."

In the second place, Chesterfield is, of all English writers, if we except Horace Walpole, the most essentially un-English. Nothing pleased him so much as a compliment paid to him when a very young man by a French gentleman at Paris: "Monsieur, vous êtes tout comme nous," and it was simple truth. In genius, in sympathy, in culture, he was far more French than English. In the French character and temper he saw the foundation of human perfection. "I have often," he writes, "said and do think that a Frenchman, who, with a fund of virtue, learning, and good sense, has the manners and good breeding of his country, is the perfection of human nature." His manners were French. He gave his house at Blackheath a French name. His favourite authors were French. He delighted to converse and write in French, and he both wrote and spoke it with the same facility and purity as English. On French canons his own critical canons were formed, on French models his taste. He thought the *Henriade* a finer poem than the *Iliad* and the *Æneid*. He preferred Racine and Corneille to Shakspeare. It is always in accordance with characteristic French taste, and with reference to characteristic French models, that his judgments are formed. Good sense combined with grace and

lucidity of expression are, as he has insisted repeatedly, the first requisites of poets. The passion and intensity of Dante were unintelligible to him. He could not read him, he said. Milton he found tedious. The transcendentalism of Petrarch disgusted him—he is “a sing-song love poet who deserved his *Laura* better than his *Lauro*.” He places, justly indeed, Ariosto above Tasso, but Voltaire above both. He applies the same canons to conduct. No generous traits, no noble or elevated instincts, can compensate deficiency in grace and in a sense of the becoming. Thus he condemns Homer for making such a character as Achilles, whom he strangely denounces as a brute and a scoundrel, the hero of an Epic Poem; and in another Letter he speaks contemptuously of “the porter-like language of Homer’s heroes.” It is not surprising that his own countrymen should have found little favour in his eyes. And in truth he seldom speaks of them except in terms expressive of dislike and even abhorrence. Their uncouth vices, their equally uncouth virtues, their manners, their dress, their speech, form topics for endless ridicule. Throughout his Letters he uses them as Horace tells us his father when educating him used his vicious neighbours,—as examples of all that youth should avoid. “I am informed,” he writes to his son, “that there are now many English at Turin, and I fear there are just so many dangers for you to encounter.” No expression in his Letters is more frequent than “Would you wish to be a John Trot?” or “I would not have you be a John Trot,” and John

Trot is with him little more than a synonym for an ordinary Englishman. If we remember rightly, the only countrymen of his whom he has heartily praised are the Duke of Marlborough and Lord Bolingbroke, both men whose manners had been formed in the school of Versailles. With the good sense, however, which always distinguished him, he recognised that if there are French virtues there are English too. Thus in one of his letters to Madame Monconseil he says in reference to his son, "My idea is to unite in him what has never been found in one person before, I mean what is best in the two nations." And in an admirable paper in *Common Sense* (No. 93) he ridicules the indiscriminate aping of French manners. He anticipated Matthew Arnold in almost all those points in which Matthew Arnold's anti-Anglicism made itself most aggressive. He defined, he analysed, he delineated, he held up the mirror to Philistinism; he showed its coarseness and ugliness, the vulgarity of its splendour, the meanness of its ideals. Its vanity he insulted by proposing, as a pattern for its imitation, a people whose name was seldom mentioned without some epithet indicative of contempt. And the Philistines have had their revenge. The injustice of which he was undoubtedly guilty in not sufficiently recognising their robust virtues as well as their deficiencies, they have repaid by magnifying his foibles into vices and his vices into crimes.

But nothing has weighed so heavily against him as the charges to which we have already referred. And on one point we can offer no defence. The contempt

with which he speaks of women, and of the relation of women to life, has always appeared to us not merely the one great flaw in his writings, but indicative of the one unsound place in his judgment and temper. His misogyny goes far beyond that of Milton, it goes even beyond that of the Restoration Dramatists. The misogyny of Milton is that of a philosopher angry with Nature, and smarting from wounded pride. The misogyny of the Restoration Dramatists is that of mere libertines and wits. But the misogyny of Chesterfield resembles that of Iago or Frederick the Great. He appears to regard women as occupying a sort of intermediate place, isolated between rational humanity and the animals. They are not bound by the laws which bind men, nor are such laws binding in relation to them. They have their own morality—that is to say, no morality at all; and a similar immunity is presumed in all who have dealings with them. As they tell no truth, so they exact no truth. “A man of sense therefore only trifles with them, plays with them, humours them, and flatters them, as he does with a spritely and forward child.” As they are incapable of sincerity and seriousness, sincerity and seriousness are quite out of place in transactions with them. And yet, “as they are necessary ingredients in all good company,” and as “their suffrages go a great way in establishing a man’s character in society,” it is necessary to please and court them. This is easily done by remembering that they have only two passions, love and vanity. As “no flattery is either too high or low for them,”

for "they will greedily swallow the highest and gratefully accept of the lowest," their capture involves little trouble and no art. But it is well to bear in mind that "those who are either indisputably beautiful or indisputably ugly are best flattered upon the score of their understandings; but those who are in a state of mediocrity, upon their beauty, or at least their graces." In flattering them, however, on the score of their understanding, care must be taken "not to drop one word about their experience, for experience implies age, and the suspicion of age no woman, let her be ever so old, ever forgives." Their chief use, apart from the pleasure of intriguing or philandering with them, lies in their being a means of culture. And for this reason. "The attentions which they require, and which are always paid them by well-bred men, keep up politeness, and give a habit of good breeding; whereas men, when they live together, and without the lenitive of women in company, are apt to grow careless, negligent, and rough among one another." For the rest they are naught. Their virtue is mere coquetry; their constancy and affections, fiction. And it was the same to the last. In a letter, for example, written not many years before his death, after making a remark so grossly indelicate as to be quite unquotable, he says, "to take a wife merely as an agreeable and rational companion will commonly be found a great mistake. Shakspeare" (it would have been more correct to say Iago) "seems to be of my opinion when he allows them only this department—

"To suckle fools and chronicle small beer."

Much of this is of course to be attributed to the age in which he lived and to the society in which he moved, and is to be regarded as simple deduction from his own experience. We have only to turn to such records as the *Suffolk Papers* and Lord Hervey's *Memoirs*, to Walpole's Correspondence, to Hogarth's Cartoons, or to any of the Memoirs merely descriptive of the fashionable life in Paris between the Regency and the Revolution, to such books as the *Memoirs of the Duc de Richelieu*, the *Memoirs of Madame du Hausset*, the Collections of Bachaumont, the novelettes of Crébillon the younger, or the correspondence of that lady who, in Villemain's phrase, blended "la prostitution au Cardinal Dubois et l'amitié de Montesquieu," and it becomes perfectly intelligible. There is every reason to believe that his own marriage was a very unhappy one, and in his wife, the illegitimate daughter of the coarse mistress of the coarsest of English kings, he certainly saw nothing calculated to give him a higher opinion of women, but much, on the other hand, to confirm him in his low one. But whatever may have been the reasons of Chesterfield's misogyny, it is undoubtedly a great blemish on his writings. It must not, however, mislead us. We are so much in the habit of reading other ages in the light of our own, and of assuming that what would apply to a man who acted and thought in a particular way among ourselves, would apply to a man who acted and thought in the same way a century ago, that we very often arrive at most erroneous con-

clusions. A man who in our day spoke and wrote of women as Chesterfield has done, would justly be set down as a scoundrel and a fool. But Chesterfield, so far from being a fool, was in some respects one of the wisest men who have ever lived ; and, so far from being a scoundrel, practised as well as preached a morality which every gentleman in the world would aspire to emulate. The truth is, as it is only just to him to say, that he was generalising from his experience of women of fashion. In one of his papers in *Common Sense* (No. 33) he has drawn a beautiful picture of what woman might be if she would only be true to nature.

There are certain writings in the literature of every country which may have a message for the world, and may have value universally, but which to the country of their production have a particular message and a peculiar value. They are generally the work of men out of touch and out of sympathy with their surroundings, separated by differences of character, temper, intellect from their fellows, viewing things with other eyes, having other thoughts, other feelings—aliens without being strangers. As ridicule is said to be the test of truth, so the judgments of these men are the tests of national life. They put to the proof its intellectual and moral currency. They call to account its creeds, its opinions, its sentiments, its manners, its fashions. For conventional touchstones and conventional standards they apply touchstones and standards of their own, derived, it may be, ideally from speculation, or derived, as is much

more commonly the case, from those of other nations. They are not only the exorcists of the Idols of the Den which are as rife with communities as with individuals, but they are more. They are the upholders of the Ideal and of the Best. As the prophets of the first, the good they have done has been mingled with much mischief; in the inculcation of the second consists their greatest service. We mean of course by the Best whatever has been carried by the human race to the highest conceivable point of perfection, and by one who inculcates the Best, one who knows where to go to find it, how to understand and relish it, and how as a criterion to apply it. Such a man, for instance, would not go to Germany or Holland for his canons of the becoming in relation to manners, or for his canons of the beautiful in relation to art, or of both in relation to the conduct of life. He would go to ancient Greece and to modern France. Now so solid and vigorous are our virtues as a nation, and so substantial and imposing are the results of them, that we are apt to ignore or perhaps not even to be conscious of the deficiencies compatible with them. But they exist for all that, and they are really serious: "On the side of beauty and taste, vulgarity; on the side of morals and feeling, coarseness; on the side of mind and spirit, unintelligence,"—such is Matthew Arnold's indictment. And, modify it as we may, much must remain which cannot in justice be deducted. To say that we have no due regard for the becoming and the beautiful, and as a rule no very clear perception of either, that "to sacrifice to the

Graces" is to most of us little more than meaningless cant, that what may be called the minor morals have anything but definite significance, and that the practice of them, whenever they are practised, consists of a sort of haphazard application of principles derived casually from vague social traditions, is to say nothing more than every one will acknowledge. And yet to admit this is to admit the existence of grievous defects, both in our temper and character, as well as in our systems of education. To no other teachers then ought we to pay more respectful attention than to those who would have us understand how much mischief and loss results from these defects, who would keep the proper standards steadily before us, and who would insist on our trying ourselves by them. Two such teachers we have had. One has been described as "a graceful sentimentalist, whom no one took seriously"; the other as "a complete master of the whole science of immorality."

Chesterfield's Letters have a threefold interest. They may be regarded as Sainte-Beuve has regarded them, as a repertory of observations on life and manners, as "a rich book, not a page of which can be read without our having to remember some happy remark," full of fine discrimination and delicate analytical power, not indeed equal to such finished studies as La Bruyère and La Rochefoucauld have left us, but holding a kind of middle place between the *Memoirs of the Chevalier de Grammont* and *Telemachus*. Or they may be regarded in relation merely to the immediate purpose for which they were designed, as

a manual of practical advice, as a treatise on the art of living becomingly under conventional conditions. From which point of view they may be compared to such works as Castiglione's *Courtier*, Guevara's *Dial of Princes*, Peacham's *Complete English Gentleman*, the Abbé de Bellegarde's *L'Art de Plaire dans la Conversation*—to such works, in fine, as the literature of every civilised country in Europe abounds in. But it is not here that their true interest lies. It is in their philosophy of life, in their attempt to revive under modern conditions ancient ethical ideas. Not only do they bear a close resemblance to Cicero's *De Officiis* in the circumstances under which they were written and in the tone and style of their composition, but their philosophy on its ethical side is in the main little more than a reproduction of the philosophy of Cicero's treatise. It is with constant reference to the first book of the *De Officiis*, and more particularly to the chapters dealing with the fourth division of the *honestum*, that these Letters should be read. The correspondence, the identity indeed, of much of Chesterfield's ethical teaching with that of Cicero¹ will be at once apparent if we examine it for a moment in detail. The perfection of character consists in the maintenance of an exquisite and absolute equilibrium of all the faculties and emotions of man, brought by culture to their utmost points of development and refinement in the case of the

¹ It is scarcely necessary to say that Cicero was himself only popularising, with certain modifications of his own, the teachings of the Greek schools, and particularly of Panætius.

former, of refinement and temper in the case of the latter. It is not merely completed self-mastery, but the harmony of the ordered whole, and a whole in which each part has been perfected. This is not all. As man lives not for himself alone, but is a unit in society, the full and efficient discharge of his obligations to society, in the various relations in which he stands to it, is of equal importance. These, then, are the two great ends of education, the perfection of the individual character and the discipline of the individual with respect to social duties. And these are the ends at which Chesterfield aims. "From the time that you have had life, it has been the principal object of mine to make you as perfect as the imperfections of human nature will allow."

All the teaching proceeds on strictly systematic principles. It begins with laying the foundations of knowledge, with awakening interest in ancient mythology and ancient and modern history, suggesting at the same time such moral and religious instruction as would be intelligible to a child. Next come rhetoric and criticism. The pupil is made to feel how and why beautiful composition and beautiful poetry are beautiful; he is initiated in the principles of good taste. Two exhortations are constantly repeated, the necessity of thoughtfulness and the necessity of attention. "There is no surer sign in the world of a little weak mind than inattention. Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well, and nothing can be done well without attention."

Step by step, with exquisite tact and skill and with unwearied patience, does the teacher proceed through these rudimentary stages, never above the capacity of his pupil, never losing sight of the final object. If we look closely, we shall see that the instruction which he will afterwards enforce with so much emphasis has been insinuated, that the very legends and fables narrated by him have had their object. The ground having been prepared, the foundations laid, the superstructure is commenced. And now Cicero is followed closely. What in the conception of both constitutes perfection of character we have seen—it is the *decorum* and the *honestum*, qualities intellectually distinguishable, but essentially identical. And the *decorum* in its relation to the *honestum* in the abstract may be defined as “whatever is consonant to that supremacy of man wherein his nature differs from other animals,” and in relation to the several divisions of the *honestum* as “that quality which is so consonant to nature that it involves the manifestation of moderation and temperance with a certain air such as becomes a gentleman.”¹ There is scarcely a letter of Chesterfield’s which is not a commentary on some portion of this. It was his aim and criterion in the lesser as in the greater morals.

¹ “Est ejus descriptio duplex. Nam et generale quoddam decorum intelligimus, quod in omni honestate versatur; et aliud huic subjectum quod pertinet ad singulas partes honestatis. Atque illud superius sic fere definiri solet: Decorum id esse, quod consentaneum sit hominis excellentiæ in eo, in quo natura ejus a reliquis animantibus differat. Quæ autem pars subjecta generi est, eam sic definiunt, ut id decorum velint esse, quod ita naturæ consentaneum sit, ut in eo moderatio et temperantia appareat cum specie quâdam liberali” (*De Officiis*, lib. i. c. 27).

The sure characteristic of a sound and strong mind is to find in everything those certain bounds, "quos ultra citrave nequit consistere rectum." These boundaries are marked out by a very fine line, which only good sense and attention can discover ; it is much too fine for vulgar eyes. In Manners this line is good breeding ; beyond it is troublesome ceremony, short of it is unbecoming negligence and inattention. In Morals it divides ostentatious Puritanism from Criminal Relaxation. In Religion, Superstition from Impiety, and, in short, every virtue from its kindred vice or weakness.—Letter CXLII. (vol. i.).

In Letter cx. he goes so far as to say "that there is more judgment required for the proper conduct of our virtues than for avoiding their opposite vices." Hence his constant warnings against excesses of all kinds—sensual excesses, gluttony, drunkenness, and profligacy ; against intellectual excesses, too great addiction to study and books ; against violent passions, such as anger, or joy and grief in excess, or excess in admiration. "I would teach him early the *nil admirari*," he says with reference to his godson, as he had before said to his son ; "I think it a very necessary lesson." And hence on the other hand his warnings—and in this, as he has said more than once, he was no Stoic—that the natural instincts and passions should not be suppressed, that pleasures should be freely indulged in provided they be within measure, and without grossness.¹ "Vive la joye," he writes to his grandson, "mais que ce soit la joye d'un homme d'esprit et pas d'un sot." Anger is not to be

¹ See Letters *passim*, but particularly Letters CLXXXVII. and CLVIII., vol. i., and Letters iv. and xxviii., vol. ii. In this point Cicero is opposed to Chesterfield, but see *De Officiis*, lib. i. c. 30 : "Sin sit quispiam, qui aliquid tribuat voluptati, diligenter ei tenendum esse ejus fruendæ modum."

checked so entirely as to render a man liable to the charge of pusillanimous patience under insult, or grief to the point of improper insensibility. To the minutest details of life is the same principle extended, for, in the phrase of his master, “*omnino si quidquam est decorum, nihil est profecto magis, quam æquabilitas universæ vitæ, tum singularum actionum,*”¹—all are notes in the harmony, which is character. “I think,” he says (Letter CXXXII.), “nothing above or below my pointing out to you or your excelling in.” The most interesting part of his teaching is where he dwells on the becoming in relation to what may be called its minor manifestations, in its relation to manners and externals. Here, too, Cicero is his guide,² but he goes much more into details than his master does. Indeed, he attaches so much importance to this subject, and has allowed it to fill a space so strangely disproportionate to the space filled by instruction on the higher morals, that with most people his name has come to be associated with this portion of his teaching alone. The reason is given in the Letters themselves. He found his pupil docile and plastic in all respects but one. He had no difficulty in making him a scholar, or in imprinting on him all that constitutes the “respectable”; but in what constitutes the “amiable” he was not only instinctively deficient, but to all appearance obstinately impervious to impression. As the Letters proceed, the anxiety of the teacher on this point increases, till at last “the graces,” their nature,

¹ *De Officiis*, lib. i. c. 31.

² *Id.* cc. 35-38.

their importance, and how they are to be acquired, come to predominate over all other subjects. We have reason to be thankful for the accident. It has enriched us where we were poor; it has instructed us in matters in which of all nations in the world we most need instruction. To say that the central idea of Chesterfield's teaching is the essential connection of the good with the beautiful, would be to credit him with a far loftier philosophy than he had any conception of; but to say that, in discerning and in insisting on the alliance between the virtues and the graces, he inculcated a kindred truth, or to speak more correctly, a phase of the same great truth, is no more than the fact. It is in his inculcation of this, in his never losing sight of it as a principle, and in his fine and subtle perception of what constitutes "the graces," that he fills a place such as no other teacher in our literature holds. We must go to ancient Greece, we must go to modern France, for writers occupying an analogous position.

His definition of the graces proceeds on the same principle as his definition of morals. They are the result of the application of the same rules, the products of the same culture, the fruits of the same soil. Judging as the world judges, a man may be perfect in the graces while altogether deficient in morals. Judging as Chesterfield judges, a man may indeed be deficient in the graces who is sound in morals; but no man can be perfect in the graces who is deficient in morals. So closely, however, in his conceptions are manners linked with morals, the graces with the

virtues, that he often regards them in the light of causes and effects, and even represents them as reciprocally productive. "They are not," he says, "the showish trifles only which some people call or think them; they are a solid good; they prevent a great deal of real mischief; they create, adorn, and strengthen friendships; they keep hatred within bounds; they promote good-humour and good-will in families where the want of them is commonly the original cause of discord" (Letter XXXVII.). "Good manners are to particular societies what good morals are to society in general, their cement and their security"; "and," he goes on to say, "I really think that next to the consciousness of doing a good action, that of doing a civil one is the most pleasing, and the epithet which I should covet most next to that of Aristides, would be that of well-bred" (Letter CLXVIII.). They are as necessary, he says in another place, to adorn and introduce intrinsic merit and knowledge as the polish is to the diamond, for without that polish it would never be worn, whatever it might weigh; and weight without lustre is lead. But the graces will not come to the call: they must be wooed to be won. Good breeding is the result of great experience, much observation, and great diligence, in a man of sound character. "It is a combination of much good sense, some good nature, and a little self-denial for the sake of others, with a view to obtain the same indulgence from them." It is the perception of the fine line which separates dignity from ceremoniousness, gentility from affec-

tation, refinement from effeminacy. It is the art of being familiar without being vulgar, of being frank without being indiscreet, of being reserved without being mysterious. It is the tact which knows the proper time and the proper place for all that is to be done, and all that is to be said, and the faculty of doing both with an air of distinction. A compound of all the agreeable qualities of body and mind, it is a compound in which none of them predominates to the exclusion of the rest. Thus far it is susceptible of analysis; but no analysis can resolve the secret of its charm. For it is the quintessence of the graces, and "would you ask me to define the graces, I can only do so by the 'Je ne sçay quoy'; would you ask me to define the 'Je ne sçay quoy,' I can only do so by the graces."¹ Essentially connected with the higher morals, it includes truth, justice, humanity. As we have already seen, nothing is insisted on more emphatically in Chesterfield's teaching than strict veracity, and not less emphatically is the practice of justice inculcated. Thus, in commenting on a remark which his son had made in a Latin exercise, he writes:

Let no quibbles of lawyers, no refinements of casuists break into the plain notions of right and wrong. To do as you would be done by is the plain, sure, and undisputed rule of morality and justice. Stick to that, and be assured that whatever breaks into it in any degree, however speciously it may be turned, and however puzzling it may be to answer it, is, notwithstanding, false in itself, unjust and criminal.—Letter CXXXII.

¹ The *loci classici* in Chesterfield on the definition of good breeding are: *Letters to Son*, vol. i. cxii. clxviii. clxix.; vol. ii. xxxvii. xxxix.; to *Godson*, cxxxv. cxcix.; and the excellent paper on "Civility and Good Breeding," contributed to the *World—Miscellaneous Works* (Stanhope), vol. v. p. 346.

But if in his conception of the ideal character any virtue may be said to predominate, it is humanity. To remember that the distinctions made between man and man, except the distinctions made by virtue and culture, are artificial, and to deal with them therefore as with natural equals, is a precept formally expressed indeed only in the later Letters, but it is practically included in the teaching of the former. Few writers are, it is true, more essentially aristocratic, but he was aristocratic not in the narrow but in the true sense of the term. "I used to think myself," he says, "in company as much above me when I was with Mr. Addison and Mr. Pope, as if I had been with all the princes of Europe." On his son and on his godson alike he is continually insisting on the duties of philanthropy:—

Humanity inclines, religion requires, and our moral duty obliges us to relieve, as far as we are able, the distresses and miseries of our fellow-creatures; but this is not all, for a true heartfelt benevolence and tenderness will prompt us to contribute what we can to their ease, their amusement, and their pleasure, as far as we innocently may. Let us then not only scatter benefits, but even strew flowers for our fellow-travellers, in the rugged ways of this wretched world.—*Letters to Godson*, cxxx.

Such is the ideal at which, in Chesterfield's conception, education should aim. It is the attainment and maintenance of perfect harmony among all the elements which make complete man; it is the adjustment of the whole nature in all its parts, in perfect symmetry; an endeavour to prevent, what Plato would prevent, a life moving without grace or

rhythm.¹ It is curious to notice how near this rhythmic notion of culture and character sometimes brings him to the *Republic*. He does not indeed attach the same importance or see so clearly the same significance in gymnastics, dancing, and music as Plato; and yet, when giving his godson a receipt for checking excessive emotion, he says, "Do everything in minuet time; speak, think, and move always in that measure, equally free from the dulness of slow or the hurry and huddle of quick time:"² we see how much in this point, at least, his ideas were those of the Greeks.³

On an impartial review, then, of Chesterfield's theory of education, how little fault is to be found with it! Indeed, it would be difficult to see in what respect a character formed on such an ideal could be regarded as deficient. In what virtue, in what accomplishment, would he be lacking, either in his relation to public or in his relation to private life? Where would he be weak, in what point unsound? And yet we cannot lay down these Letters without a sense of their utter unsatisfactoriness as teachings. The impression they leave on us is very like that left on us by Seneca's *Epistles* to Lucilius—the impression of unreality; though for a very different reason. The impression of unreality in the case of Seneca is caused, not so much by what he preaches, as from the unconscious reflection in what he preaches of the

¹ μετὰ ἀρρυθμίας τε καὶ ἀχαριστίας (*Rep.* iii. 411).

² Letter cxxxv.

³ See, too, the remarkable chapters on this subject in Elyot's *Governour*, Book I. cap. xxii. *seqq.*

insincerity of the preacher. We feel that his precepts and lectures are no more in keeping with the truth of his own life than his eulogy on Poverty was in keeping with the priceless table on which it was written. But the impress of sincerity is on every page of Chesterfield. The ideal he drew he had in himself realised. The unreality and unsatisfactoriness of his system lay in its attempt to revive an ideal, which it is now impossible to revive, at all events popularly. It lay, to employ a word which has little to recommend it, but for which our language has no equivalent, in its pure paganism. His whole philosophy is of the world, worldly. Of the spiritual, of the transcendental, of the enthusiastic, it has nothing. He attaches, it is true, the very greatest importance to conventional religion, but he does so, it is evident, for the same reasons that the ancient legislators and moralists did so. The deference which he pays to Christianity is, we feel, no more than the deference which would have been paid to it by any wise and well-natured man of the old world, who knew the needs it was meeting and was aware of its virtues. Of its essence there is as little or as much as there is in the Aristotelian *Ethics* or in the *Enchiridion*. In one important point, indeed, its teachings are set aside altogether, and that point a point on which the ancient standard of morals cannot be substituted for the standards now immutably fixed by Christian ethics. Again, no considerations either of a future state or of a divine guidance affect in any way what is prescribed or suggested. On the contrary, the

sentiment of Juvenal, "*nullum numen abest si sit prudentia*"—we have every deity we need if we have prudence—is constantly quoted with the strongest expressions of approval. The end and aim of his teaching throughout is success in life, not as the vulgar estimate it, nor as transcendentalists like Plato and Emerson would estimate it, but as Aristippus and Horace would estimate it.

A philosophy of this kind is now an anachronism. The Religion which has revolutionised the world has made havoc of such ideals. It has turned much which once passed for wisdom into foolishness. Much that in ancient days constituted the moral sublime is now impiety, and the sentiments in which it found expression, profanity. What in the eyes of Pericles and Cato were venial follies, have become deadly sins. Success in life, as success in life is defined even in the scriptures of the Lyceum and the Porch, is such as would ill satisfy the modern conscience. The very name of the quality on which ancient sages most prided themselves has been transformed into a term of opprobrium. The world cannot go back. And the fate of Chesterfield's teachings is indeed typical of what is likely to be the fate, and particularly in England, of all such teachings when they aspire to provide a complete rule of life. But no possible good can be done by misrepresentation and falsehood, and, much as wise men must respect the prejudice which exists against these writings, the form in which that prejudice has found expression cannot be too strongly condemned.

It is not to be condemned only, it is to be deplored. It is in the judgments of men like Chesterfield that conventional religious truths find their strongest collateral security. Absolutely unprejudiced and absolutely independent, he brings to bear on the facts of life, of which he had had a much wider and more varied experience than falls to the lot of many men, an intellect of extraordinary acuteness and sagacity, a judgment eminently discriminating and sober, and a temper strictly under the dominion of reason. He had studied, with minute and patient attention, the questions which are of the most vital interest to man and society, and the conclusions at which he arrived he has, regardless of anything but what he believed to be the truth, and with no object but the purest and most unselfish of all objects, both set forth and explained. That these conclusions should in so many important respects be identical with those of Christian moralists, that they should have convinced him of the wisdom of the strongest conservatism in what pertains to our religious system, and of the folly and wickedness of attempting to undermine it, is surely testimony not interesting merely, but of much value. Truth has many sides, and has need of many supports. What Locke observed of Revelation, that it was a republication of Natural Religion, is in a measure, if we may say so without irreverence, applicable to such works as these; they are a republication, fragmentary indeed, and not without alloy, but in an independent form, of conventional truths.

Matthew Arnold has said of Butler's *Analogy* that whatever may be thought of its philosophy, its perusal is a valuable exercise for the mind. We are tempted to make a similar remark about Chesterfield's writings. They are not, indeed, likely to be of benefit in the sense intended by Matthew Arnold. They will not, that is to say, discipline our reasoning faculties, or tend to form habits of close concentration; but they will be of benefit to us as communion with men of superior intellect and temper is of benefit. The charm of Chesterfield lies in his sincerity and truthfulness, in his refined good sense, in his exquisite perception of the becoming, finding expression in seriousness most happily tempered by gaiety. Of no man could it be more truly said that he had cleared his mind of cant. A writer more absolutely devoid of pretentiousness or affectation cannot be found. Of moral and intellectual frippery he has nothing. Sophistry and paradox are his abhorrence. All he has written bears, indeed, the reflection of a character which is of all characters perhaps the rarest—"the character of one"—it was what Voltaire said of him—"who had never been in any way either a charlatan or a dupe of charlatans." He is one of the very few writers who never wears a mask, and in whose accent no falsetto note can ever be detected. In his fearless intellectual honesty he reminds us of Swift, in his pellucid moral candour he reminds us of Montaigne. To contemplate life, not as it presents itself under the glamour or the gloom of illusion and prejudice, as it presents itself to the enthusiast or the

cynic, but as it really is; to regard ignorance as misfortune and vice as evil, but the false assumption of wisdom and virtue as something far worse; to be or to strive to be what pride would have us seem, and to live worthily within the limits severally prescribed by nature and fortune—all this will the study of Chesterfield's philosophy tend to impress on us. Nor is it in his judgments only on life and on life's important concerns that this sincerity, this pure sincerity, is conspicuous. It is equally apparent in all that concerns himself, in the frank admissions which he makes to his son of his own follies and shortcomings, in the unaffected modesty with which he has spoken of his writings, and in the remarkable illustration afforded by those writings themselves of the conscientiousness with which he carried out his own precept, that "whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well." It is difficult to believe that these compositions, finished as they almost all of them are to the finger-nail, were intended for no eyes but those of his son and his son's tutor. And yet such, as we learn from the Letters themselves, was the case.

In Chesterfield is united as in no other English writer is united, in equal measure at least, so much of what is best in the intellectual temper of the French and in the intellectual temper of the English. He has much of the sterling good sense of Johnson, and, if we penetrate below the surface, much also of Johnson's seriousness and solidity. He resembles Swift, not merely in his intolerance of sophistry and

dishonesty in all that pertains to sentiment and principle, but in his shrewd and homely mother-wit, and in his keen, clear insight into positive as distinguished from transcendental truth. Franklin himself is not more purely practical, or Paley more purely utilitarian. But it was not these qualities which led Sainte-Beuve to speak of him as the La Rochefoucauld of England, nor is it these qualities which give him his peculiar place among English authors. It still remains that, in spite of so much which is characteristic of the English genius and the English temper, the impression he makes on us is that he is one of the most un-English of English authors. And this is easily explained. What strikes us in a building is not the foundation but the superstructure. In Chesterfield it is the foundation, and the foundation only, which is English ; the superstructure is French. Or, to employ his own happy illustration, what is English in him stands in the same relation to what is French as the Tuscan order in Architecture stands to the Doric, Ionian, and Corinthian orders ; as unadorned solidity stands to the charm in contrast of attractive ornament. We admire in him what we admire in La Bruyère and La Rochefoucauld, what we admire in Voltaire, what we admire, in short, in the literature most characteristic of the Grand Siècle. But if we look a little more closely we cannot fail to be struck with the manner in which English characteristics in Chesterfield tempered the French. His solid good sense never deserts him : he is at bottom serious, at bottom earnest. Thus, nice and

delicate as his faculty of discrimination is, it never, as is so often the case with La Bruyère, refines itself into over-niceness and over-subtlety, and never, as is habitually the case with La Rochefoucauld, fritters itself away in brilliant falsehoods or in specious half-truths. If he has much in common with Voltaire, he has nothing of Voltaire's recklessness, nothing of his shallow drollery, nothing of his mere frivolity.

The style of Chesterfield is the exact reflection of himself. It is the finished expression, not of rhetorical culture, but of the culture by which all that constitutes character is moulded. It is the unlaboured result of labour; the spontaneous product of a peculiar soil which had been assiduously cultivated during half a lifetime. Absolutely unaffected, simply original, and without mannerisms of any kind, it is a style which no mechanical skill could have attained, and which no mechanical skill can copy. It is not merely that it is distinguished by "those careless inimitable graces" which Gibbon in describing Hume's style speaks of himself as "contemplating with admiring despair," but that it has the indefinable charm, the incommunicable *timbre* of the perfect, of the essential aristocratic—of the aristocrat, it must now be added, of a school which is no more. Its secret was no doubt partly learned in the salons of the Faubourg St. Germain, and from intimate sympathetic communion with men and writers who, whether living or dead, whether in ancient Italy or modern England and France, belonged like himself either by birth or association

to the Optimates. We know no writings from the pen of mere men of letters in which the note of Chesterfield is for a moment discernible. But as soon as we turn to the Letters of Cicero and the younger Pliny, to the Letters and Essays of Temple and Bolingbroke, to the writings of La Bruyère and La Rochefoucauld, we recognise at once the same tone and accent. We appear indeed to discern his models, but the resemblance, as we soon perceive, is not the resemblance of imitation, it is the resemblance of kinship. In two respects the diction of Chesterfield is especially noticeable,—in its exquisite finish, and in its scrupulous purity. It is the perfection of the epistolary style, flexibly adapting itself with the utmost ease and propriety to what, in varying tones, is expressed or suggested,—now neat, pointed, epigrammatic, now gracefully diffuse, now rising to dignity; but always natural and always easy. Though he abhorred pedantry, Cicero and Pollio themselves were not more scrupulous purists in Latinity than Chesterfield in the use of English. He had all that punctilious regard for the nicest accuracy of expression, which made Cicero at the most critical moment of his life almost as anxious about the correct employment of a preposition and a verb as about the movements of Pompey. An ungrammatical sentence, a loose or ambiguous expression, a word unauthorised by polite usage, or, if coined, coined improperly—a vulgarism or solecism indeed in any form, he regarded as little less than a crime in a writer. If it should be pro-

posed to select the two authors who in point of mere purity of diction stand out most conspicuous in our prose literature, it would, we think, be pretty safe to name Macaulay for the one and Chesterfield for the other. We do not say that he is entirely free from blemishes—

quas aut incuria fudit,
Aut humana parum cavit natura—

but we do say that he has fewer of them, with the exception of Macaulay, than perhaps any other English classic.

That of a man so truly remarkable—for if as a statesman Chesterfield played a subordinate he played a singularly interesting part—there should be no standard biography, that of writings which have so just a claim to be considered classical there should be no standard edition accessible, is not creditable to his countrymen. It is surely high time for both these defects to be supplied. The dull compilation of Maty, which is the only biography in existence worth mentioning, ought long ago to have been superseded. Lord Stanhope's edition of the *Works* is now so costly that it is beyond the reach, not merely of most private individuals, but of most public libraries. No more interesting contribution to the social and political history of the last century, no more valuable addition to the literature which deserves to become influential and popular, could be made than a really good biography of Chesterfield and a judiciously expurgated and well-edited reprint of his Letters.

Johnson has said that all writers who wish to acquire the art of being familiar without being coarse, and elegant without being ostentatious in style, should give their days and nights to the volumes of Addison. We are none of us likely to give our days and nights either to the volumes of Addison or to the volumes of Chesterfield. And yet in times like the present we shall do well to turn occasionally to the writings of Chesterfield, and for other purposes than the acquisition of style. In an age distinguished beyond all precedent by recklessness, charlatanry, and vulgarity, nothing can be more salutary than communion with a mind and genius of the temper of his. We need the corrective—the educational corrective—of his refined good sense, his measure, his sobriety, his sincerity, his truthfulness, his instinctive application of aristocratic standards in attainment, of aristocratic touchstones in criticism. We need more, and he has more to teach us. We need reminding that life is success or failure, not in proportion to the extent of what it achieves in part, and in accidents, but in proportion to what it becomes in essence, and in proportion to its symmetry.

THE PORSON OF SHAKSPEARIAN CRITICISM¹

THE fate of Lewis Theobald is without parallel in literary history. It may be said with simple truth that no poet in our own or in any language has ever owed so great a debt to an editor as Shakspeare owes to this man. He found the text of the tragedies and comedies, which is now so intelligible and lucid, in a condition scarcely less deplorable than that in which Aldus found the choruses of Æschylus, and Musurus the parabases of Aristophanes, and he contributed more to its certain and permanent settlement than all the other editors from Rowe to Alexander Dyce. And yet there are probably not half-a-dozen men in England who would not be surprised to hear this. To most people indeed he is known only as he was known to Joseph Warton, as the hero of the first editions of the *Dunciad*, as “a cold, plodding, and tasteless writer and critic, who with great propriety was chosen on the death of Settle by the Goddess of Dulness to be the chief instrument of that great work which was the subject of the poem.” Gibbeted in couplets which

¹ *The Works of Shakspeare*. Collated with the oldest copies, and corrected by Mr. Theobald. London, 1733.

have passed into proverbs wherever the English language is read, and which every man with any tincture of letters has by heart, his very name has become a synonym for creeping pedantry. No satirist excels, or it would perhaps be more correct to say equals, Pope in the art of employing falsehood in the service of truth. What is untrue of a particular individual may be true of a class, but while what is true or untrue of a particular individual is of comparatively little moment to the world, what is true of a class is true typically, and is therefore of interest to all mankind. Of the correctness, for example, of Pope's portrait of the mere verbal scholar, of the justice of the ridicule and contempt with which he has treated philologists as a class, there can be no question. We know how important it is that such men should understand their proper place, and the mischief which has resulted from their not understanding it, and we read with approval, admiration, gratitude. But who stops to consider whether the particular individual who has been selected for ridicule, and whose name has been written under the portrait, is or is not entitled to the ignoble distinction? He is of no interest as a mere individual; he has become a type. He has been made the scapegoat of a class whose worst errors and whose worst vices will for ever be associated with him.

This it is which makes the satire of Pope so truly terrible. It has in some cases literally blasted the characters which it has touched. One of the most delightful autobiographies ever written, and a comedy

which is in its way a masterpiece, have been powerless to counteract, nay even to modify, the impression left on the world by the portrait for which Pope made Colley Cibber sit. As long as the loathsome traits which are delineated in the character of "Sporus" repel and sicken mankind, so long will the name of John Lord Hervey be infamous. Of the impotence of truth to contend with the fiction of so great an artist as Pope, the result of Mr. Croker's attempt to vindicate Hervey's fame is a striking illustration. In 1848 Mr. Croker published that nobleman's *Memoirs*, prefixing an Introduction, in which he proved, as indeed the *Memoirs* themselves proved, that the original of Pope's picture was a man whose genius and temper had been cast rather in the mould of St. Simon and Tacitus than in that of the foppish and loathsome hermaphrodite with whom he had been associated. But the popular estimate of Hervey remains unchanged. He was "Sporus" to our ancestors, who had neither his *Memoirs* nor Mr. Croker's Introduction before them, and he is "Sporus" to us who have both, but who, unfortunately for Hervey, care for neither, and know Pope's verses by heart.

But pre-eminent among the victims of his satire stands Theobald, and Theobald's fate has assuredly been harder than that of any other of his fellow-sufferers. For in his case injustice has been cumulative, and it has been his lot to be conspicuous. From the publication of the *Dunciad* to the present day he has been the butt of almost every critic and biographer of Shakspeare and Pope. Indeed, the shamelessness

of the injustice with which he has been treated by his brother commentators on Shakspeare exceeds belief. Generation after generation it has been the same story. After plundering his notes and appropriating his emendations, sometimes with, but more generally without, acknowledgment, they all contrive, each in his own fashion, to reproduce Pope's portrait of him. Whenever they mention him, if they do not couple with their remarks some abusive or contemptuous expression, it is with a sort of half-apology for introducing his name. They refer to him, in fact, as a gentleman might refer among his friends to a shoe-black who had just amused him with some witticism while polishing his boots. Perhaps impudence never went further than in Pope's own appropriation of Theobald's labours. Pope's first edition of Shakspeare came out in 1725, and in 1726 Theobald published his *Shakspeare Restored*, in which he exposed the blunders and defects with which Pope's volumes swarmed, and in which he first gave to the world the greater part of his own admirable emendations. Pope's publishers, probably seeing that an edition containing such a text as he had given would come to be regarded as little better than an imposition on the public, and that no text could be regarded as satisfactory without Theobald's corrections and emendations, persuaded the angry poet to bring out a second edition. Accordingly in 1728 appeared Pope's second edition. Coolly incorporating, without a word to indicate them, almost all Theobald's best conjectures and regulations of the text, he inserts in his last volume,

with an assurance which would have done honour to Voltaire or Junius, the following amusing note :—

Since the publication of our first edition, there having been some attempts upon Shakspeare, published by Lewis Theobald, which he would not communicate during the time wherein that edition was preparing for the press, when we by public advertisement did request the assistance of all lovers of this author, we have inserted in this impression as many of 'em as are judged of any the least importance to the Poet—the whole amounting to about twenty-five words [a gross misrepresentation of his debt to Theobald]. But to the end that every reader may judge for himself, we have annexed a complete list of the rest, which if he shall think trivial or erroneous, either in part or the whole, at worst it can but spoil but half a sheet of paper that chances to be left vacant here.

“From this time,” says Johnson, “Pope became an enemy to editors, collators, commentators, and verbal critics, and hoped to persuade the world that he miscarried in this undertaking only by having a mind too great for such minute employment.” Irritated by Theobald’s *Shakspeare Restored*, in which personally he had been treated respectfully, but irritated still more by certain critical remarks which Theobald was in the habit of inserting in a current publication called *Mist’s Journal*,¹ and in which he had not been treated with respect, he had already made the unfortunate critic the hero of the *Dunciad*. He returned again to the attack, and with much more acrimony, in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*. Pope found an ally in Mallet; and in *Verbal Criticism*, a

¹ This is the point of the reference in the couplet—

Old puns restore, lost blunders nicely seek,
And crucify poor Shakspeare once a week.

Dunciad (1st edit.), i. 153, 154.

satire now deservedly forgotten, but then widely read, poor Theobald took for the third time his place in the pillory.

His next detractor was Warburton, and of Warburton's conduct it is difficult to speak with patience. The two men had for some years been on intimate terms, and, in a lengthy correspondence, which has been preserved and may be found in Nichols' *Illustrations of Literature*,¹ Theobald had communicated to Warburton, for whom he appears to have had unbounded admiration, the notes which he was then engaged in drawing up for an intended edition of Shakspeare. Warburton, then an obscure country clergyman, amused himself in leisure moments with scribbling notes and emendations of his own, and these he presented very good-naturedly to Theobald. Of his notes there are not twenty of the smallest value, of his emendations there are not half-a-dozen which are not either superfluous or execrable. Whoever will compare Theobald's own notes and emendations with those contributed by Warburton will not only see how little he owed to his pompous ally, but how much his work has suffered by being encumbered with Warburton's impertinences. But the spell which Warburton afterwards threw over Pope and Hurd he had succeeded apparently in throwing over poor Theobald. Warburton's contributions he received with abject gratitude, and with abject gratitude he acknowledges them in his Preface and throughout his notes. Indeed, he seems to delight in parading his

¹ Vol. ii. pp. 204-654.

obligations to his "most ingenious and ever-respected friend." After the publication of the Shakspeare their friendship cooled. Warburton was now rising to eminence, and becoming, no doubt, ashamed of his association with the hero of the *Dunciad*. An adroit piece of flattery which he had introduced into an article contributed by him to a current periodical had prepared the way for an acquaintance with Pope. His Reply to Crousaz's *Examen* had greatly pleased Pope; an introduction to the poet followed, and at the end of 1740 he had become Pope's staunchest ally and most intimate friend. In 1744 Theobald died, and three years afterwards appeared Warburton's edition of Shakspeare. It is to be hoped for the honour of human nature that there are few parallels to the meanness and baseness of which Warburton stands convicted in this work. His object was two-fold. The first and most important was to build the reputation of his own edition on the ruin of his predecessor's, and the next to insinuate that any merit which is to be found in Theobald's edition is to be attributed not to Theobald but to himself. After observing in the Preface that Theobald "succeeded so ill that he left his author in ten times a worse condition than he found him," he goes on to say that "it was my ill-fortune to have some accidental connection with him"; that "I contributed a great number of observations to him," and these, "as he wanted money, I allowed him to print."¹

¹ Capell had in his possession, so the Cambridge editors tell us, a copy of Theobald's Shakspeare which had belonged to Warburton. In this copy

He then proceeds to draw Theobald's character as an editor and critic :—

Mr. Theobald was naturally turned to industry and labour. What he read he could transcribe ; but as what he thought, if ever he did think, he could but ill express, so he read on ; and by that means got a character of learning without risking to every observer the imputation of wanting a better talent. By a punctilious collation of the old books, he corrected what was manifestly wrong in the later editions by what was manifestly right in the earlier. And this is his real merit, and the whole of it. . . . Nor had he either common judgment to see, or critical sagacity to amend, what was manifestly faulty. Hence he generally exerts his conjectural talent in the wrong place. He tampers with what is sound in the common books, and in the old ones omits all notice of variations the sense of which he did not understand.

Having thus disposed of his dead friend in the Preface, he proceeds to appropriate his labours. He adopts Theobald's text as the basis of his own ; he steals his illustrations ; he incorporates, generally without a word of acknowledgment, most of Theobald's best emendations, carefully assigning to him such as are of little importance, while in his notes he keeps up a running fire of sneers and sarcasms. Of many of his most felicitous emendations he robs him by a device so despicable that it deserves notice. Incorporating the emendation, he adds in a note, "*Spelt*

Warburton had, we are told, claimed the notes which he gave to Theobald, and "which Theobald deprived him of and made his own." If in this copy, which we have not had the opportunity of inspecting, Warburton has laid claim to more than Theobald has assigned to him, we believe him to be guilty of dishonesty even more detestable than that of which the proofs are, as we have shown, indisputable. No one who reads Theobald's notes can for one moment doubt his honesty. So far from concealing obligations, he seems to delight in acknowledging them. If a friend or anonymous correspondent supplied him with any information, or even with a suggestion or hint of which he has availed himself, it is always scrupulously noted.

right by Mr. Theobald." It is thus that he treats the exquisite correction of "*bisson* conspicuities" for *besom* (*Coriolanus*, Act ii. Sc. 1); of *shows* for *shoes* in the line "As great Alcides *shoes* upon an ass" (*King John*, Act ii. Sc. 2); of *eisel* (*i.e.* vinegar) for *Esile* in "Woo't drink up *Esile*, eat a crocodile" (*Hamlet*, Act v. Sc. 1), though he knew perfectly well that the word, being printed in italics in the old copies, had always been supposed to mean the name of some river, till Theobald restored not only the spelling but the sense. Nor is this all; he has, in more than one case, attributed to others notes and corrections which Theobald had, as he well knew, communicated to him in the long correspondence which had passed between them some years before.

But Theobald's reputation was to find a new assailant far more formidable than Warburton, and not less formidable than Pope. It is difficult to account for Dr. Johnson's hostility. He was hardly the man to be guilty of deliberate injustice. He had perhaps not troubled himself to consult Theobald's work with any care, but had been content to take his character and achievements on trust from Pope and Warburton. He describes him as "a man of narrow comprehension and small acquisitions, with no native and intrinsic splendour of genius, with little of the artificial light of learning, but zealous for minute accuracy, and not negligent in attaining it." He comments also on the "inflated emptiness" of some of his notes, describes him as "weak and ignorant," and though he allows "that what little he did was

commonly right," reproduces, in effect, the portrait drawn of him by Pope and Warburton. Unhappily too for Theobald's fame, Johnson's detraction is not confined to the Preface to his Shakspeare, which nobody reads, but is repeated in the *Lives of the Poets*, which all the world reads. And what he wrote he said, and to what he said Boswell has given wings. "You think, sir,"—Dr. Burney was the speaker—"that Warburton is a superior critic to Theobald."—"Oh, sir," replied the sage, "he'd make two-and-fifty Theobalds cut into slices." Johnson's treatment of Theobald is, it may be added, the more remarkable, because some twenty years before, in his *Miscellaneous Observations on Macbeth*, he had spoken of Theobald with great respect, observing of his emendations that "some of them are so excellent, that even when he has failed he ought to be treated with indulgence and respect."

But the public had been wiser than the critics. Between 1733 and 1757 Theobald's work had passed through three editions, the first two of which had alone circulated no less than 12,860 copies¹; while between 1757 and 1773 it had been reprinted four times. This accounts, no doubt, for the persistency, if not for the rancour, of the attacks which were made on him and his labours by rival editors. As we come to the later editors, to Capell and Malone, for instance—Steevens, by the way, had the honesty to do him some justice—we find no indications of hostility. They simply assume him to be all that Pope, War-

¹ Nichols, *Illustrations of Literature*, vol. ii. p. 714.

burton, and Johnson had represented, a dull and plodding drudge—

a wight that scans and spells ;
A word-catcher that lives on syllables—

and content themselves with appropriating his labours. “That his (Theobald’s) work should at this day be considered of any value,” coolly observes Malone, whose own edition of Shakspeare is, in almost every page, indebted to the man of whom he thus speaks, “only shows how long impressions will remain when they are once made.”

Coleridge, who appears to have known nothing about Theobald, except what he had learned from Warburton, next took up the cry, and, in his *Notes and Lectures on Shakspeare*, never mentions him without coupling his name with some contemptuous expression. With assailants so formidable, and with those whose studies particularly qualified them for appreciating his services to criticism resorting on principle to such devices for concealing and misrepresenting them, it is not surprising that the world’s estimate of Theobald should be what it is. The many have neither leisure nor ability to form conclusions for themselves. The crowd moves with the crowd, and the mass follows the bell-wethers. In this particular case the bell-wethers have, unfortunately for Theobald, been Pope and Johnson ; and whoever will take the trouble to turn to the opinions which have recently been expressed about our critic, will see a most amusing illustration of the ways of the flock. Mr. Courthope follows, meekly and obediently,

the guiding tinkle, and in his pages the only virtue possessed by Theobald is that he was not "so malignant as many of the other dunces." "He was, in fact, utterly insignificant: and if he had not been unlucky enough to venture on a criticism of Pope's edition of Shakspeare, he might have remained in peaceful obscurity."¹ Mr. Leslie Stephen, though he shows no disposition to rebel, follows without any consonant bleat and is plainly uneasy; in fact, he compromises the matter by remaining silent about Theobald's merits or demerits, merely remarking that he was an "unlucky writer, to whom the merit is attributed of having first illustrated Shakspeare by a study of the contemporary literature."² But the Cambridge editors are courageously recalcitrant, and break away altogether with "Theobald, as an editor, is incomparably superior to his predecessor, and to his immediate successor Warburton, although the latter had the advantage of working on his materials. . . . Many most brilliant emendations, such as could not have suggested themselves to a mere 'cold, plodding, and tasteless critic,' are due to him."³ This is something, but it is not much. To be superior, and even incomparably superior, to such editors as Pope and Warburton, would be no great honour to any one. However, it was a bleat of dissent; and feeble though it was, it was loud enough to reach the ears of Dr. Birkbeck Hill, whom it suddenly arrested. If anything which is not exactly stated can be plain, it is

¹ *Life of Pope*, p. 218.

² Monograph on Pope, p. 121.

³ *Cambridge Shakspeare*, p. xxxi.

plain from Dr. Hill's note¹ on Theobald that he had no suspicion that Johnson's estimate of him was a wrong one; nay, that he is by no means clear even now that Johnson was not in the right. But the Cambridge editors have made him very uncomfortable, and he stands at gaze in a note in which he expresses no opinion of his own, but transcribes the remarks of the Cambridge editors, adding silently two specimens of Theobald's emendations. Dr. Birkbeck Hill may, if he ever meets them, feel quite at ease both with the shade of Johnson and with the shade of Theobald.

How poor Theobald's reputation is likely to stand with those who go to Biographical Dictionaries and Encyclopædias for their knowledge may be judged from the account given of him in the last edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*:—

Theobald (Lewis) will survive as the prime butt of the original Dunciad, when as a playwright, a *littérateur*, a translator, and even as a Shakspearian commentator he will be entirely forgotten. He was a man with literary impulses, but without genius, even of a superficial kind. As a student, as a commentator, he might have led a happy and enviable life, had not the vanity of the literary idea led him into a false position—

a model, it may be added, both in style and matter, of what an article in an Encyclopædia should be.

But it is time to turn to Theobald himself, and we trust our readers will not think us tedious if we state at length his claims to be regarded not only as the father of Shakspearian criticism, but as the editor to whom our great poet is most deeply indebted. To speak of any of the eighteenth-century editors in the

¹ Edition of Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. i. p. 329.

same breath with him is absurd. In the first place he had what none of them possessed—a fine ear for the rhythm of blank verse, and the nicest sense of the *nuances* of language as well in relation to single words as to words in combination—faculties which, as it is needless to say, are indispensable to an emendator of Shakspeare, or, indeed, of any other poet. In every department of textual criticism he excelled. In its humbler offices, in collation, in transcription, in the correction of clerical errors, he was, as even his enemies have frankly admitted, the most patient and conscientious of drudges. To the elucidation of obscurities in expression or allusion, and for the purposes of illustrative commentary generally, he brought a stock of learning such as has never perhaps been found united in any other commentator on Shakspeare. An accomplished Greek scholar,¹ as his trans-

¹ He translated, and very meritorious translations they are, the *Electra*, the *Ajax*, and the *Œdipus Rex* of Sophocles; the *Nubes* and *Plutus* of Aristophanes; the *Hero and Leander* of the Pseudo-Museus; and the *Phædo* of Plato. His corrections and emendations of the authors referred to will be found in Jortin's *Miscellaneous Observations*, vol. ii.; in Nichols' *Illustrations of Literature*, vol. ii.; in the Preface and Notes to his Shakspeare *passim*. He left also some notes on Æschylus, with emendations, which Blomfield used when preparing his edition. See Blomfield's *Prometheus* (edit. 1810), note following the Preface.

Scholars may perhaps be interested to see two or three specimens of Theobald's emendations of Greek texts. In an ancient epitaph printed in Wheeler's *Greek Antiquities and Inscriptions* appeared this couplet—

Παρθένον ἥς ἀπέλυσε μήτηρ ἩΣΔΡΙΟΝ ἄνθος
Ἔσκεν ἐν ἡμιτελεῖ πανσάμενον θαλάμῳ.

For the unintelligible *ἡσδριον* he proposes most felicitously *ἥς ἡρὼν*. Bentley might have envied the following emendation of a passage in Eustathius, who is speaking of the Thersites episode: ἀλλὰ χάριν γέλωτος εὐτελείας ἡ κωμῳδία στοχάζεται, ταῦτα δὲ πάντα παρὰ τῷ ποιητῇ εὐρηται· κωμῳδῶν μὲν γὰρ ΚΑΤΑΡΡΙΠΤΕΙ τὸν Θερεσίτην. This of course makes no sense, as Homer says nothing about Thersites being thrown down. By the alteration of one letter Theobald restores the passage—reading *καταρράπτει* he interprets “comædum

lations from Sophocles, Aristophanes, and Plato, as well as his emendations of Æschylus, Suidas, Athenæus, Hesychius, and others abundantly prove, his acquaintance with Greek literature was intimate and extensive. His notes teem with most apposite illustrations drawn not merely from the writings with which all scholars are more or less familiar, but from the fragments of Menander and Philemon, from the *Anthology*, and from the miscellaneous literature of Alexandria and Byzantium. His illustrations from the Roman classics—and they range from Ennius to Boethius—are still more numerous. He appears to have been well versed also in Italian, French, and Spanish, an accomplishment which assisted him greatly in his work as an editor and commentator. It not only supplied him with many happy parallels and illustrations, but it enabled him to trace many legends and traditions to their source, and, what was more important, it enabled him to correct the gibberish into which words in these languages, or unnaturalised words derived from these languages, were almost invariably transformed in the text of the quartos and folios. To our own language and literature he had evidently paid much attention. He was one of the very few men of his time who possessed some knowledge of Anglo-Saxon and early Middle English. The frequency and aptness of his quotations from the

autem agens (Poeta) Thersitem operi suo asserit (vel inserit).” So again the Scholiast on Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 733, commenting on the words of the poor Megarean, who in his hunger is coming to sell his two daughters, ἀκούετον δὲ, ποτέχετ’ ἐμὴν τὰν γαστέρα, closes his note by observing μικρὰ δὲ ἡ ἐννοια τῷ ποιητῇ, which of course has no point, but Theobald, substituting α for κ, reading μικρὰ for μικρά, undoubtedly restores the proper word.

Canterbury Tales proved his familiarity with Chaucer. Thus, in correcting the absurd expression in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Act iv. Sc. 4), "Her eyes are grey as *grass*," he recalled Chaucer's Prioress, "Her eyen grey as glass," and detected the true reading in a moment. Though he seems, like all his contemporaries, to have known comparatively little of the minor poets and prose writers of the Elizabethan age, he had carefully studied Spenser, and his knowledge of the dramatists who immediately preceded and who surrounded and followed Shakspeare was probably greater than that possessed by any scholar in England till the appearance of Malone.¹ To these stores of general erudition he added a minute and particular acquaintance with all those books which are known to have furnished Shakspeare with materials for his plots, or which he would have been likely to consult. He was the first to collate the English Historical Plays with Holinshed's Chronicles, and the Roman Plays with North's *Plutarch*; and he was thus enabled to detect and rectify many errors in the text, as well as to throw light on much that was obscure both in allusions and in incidents. He was the first also to collate the romantic comedies and tragi-comedies with the Italian

¹ He says himself, Preface to his *Shakspeare* (first edit.), p. lxxviii., that he had read "above 800 old English plays" for the purpose of illustrating Shakspeare. If Malone's assertion that there were only about 550 plays printed before the Restoration, exclusive of those written by Shakspeare, Jonson, and Fletcher, be correct, this must be an exaggeration. However this may be, it is certain that his acquaintance with this branch of literature was unusually extensive. His library certainly contained, as the advertisement of the sale testifies, "295 old English Plays in Quarto, some of them so scarce as not to be had at any price"; many of them, it adds, full of Theobald's manuscript notes (see Reed's note in *Variorum Shakspeare*, vol. i. p. 404).

novels, and with the happiest results, both particularly with reference to the correction of the text, and generally with reference to illustrative commentary.

Nor are the obligations under which he has laid succeeding commentators less when we take into account the light which he has thrown on Shakspeare's more recondite allusions. His notes are indeed a mine of miscellaneous learning, clearing up fully and once for all what might have remained undetected for generations. Thus in *Twelfth Night* (Act v. Sc. 1) occurs the line—

Had I the heart to do it,
Like to the Egyptian thief at point of death,
Kill what I love ?—

an allusion, as Theobald points out, to a passage in the *Æthiopica* of Heliodorus (book vii.). So again in the same play, Act iii. Sc. 2, in the words, "Taunt him with the licence of ink ; if *thou thou'st him some thrice* it shall not be amiss," his knowledge of the State Trials enabled him to detect an allusion to Coke's brutal taunt to Raleigh : "All that he did was by thy instigation, *thou Viper*, for I *thou* thee, *thou* Traitor."¹ Thus his curious reading in old and forgotten Elizabethan plays enabled him to explain the allusions in "Basilisco-like" (*King John*, Act i. *ad fin.*); "Clapt on the shoulder and call'd Adam" (*Much Ado*, Act i. Sc. 1); "John Drum's entertainment" (*All's Well that Ends Well*, Act iii. Sc. 6),

¹ We now know from Manningham's *Diary* that *Twelfth Night* must have been composed two-and-a-half years before Raleigh's trial ; but as it did not appear in print till 1623, there is no reason why this passage may not have been added after the trial ; indeed, nothing is more likely.

and many others of a similar kind. So, too, his curious reading in such writers as Dares Phrygius, Tiraquellus, and Alexander ab Alexandro enabled him to correct the passage, much of it mere jargon, in the prologue to *Troilus and Cressida* enumerating the Trojan gates, while his acquaintance with Caxton's *Trojan Chronicles* led him to the true explanation of the "dreadful Sagittary" in the same play. His knowledge of the controversial religious literature of the Elizabethan age, and of pamphlets illustrating the social life of that time, enabled him to clear up many minor obscurities, and to show the point of allusions which, being purely local, had long ceased to be significant. A remarkable instance of this is his note on Edgar's mad speeches in *King Lear*, in which he comments on the art with which Shakspeare has, with the object of pleasing James I., so worded Edgar's gibberish as to make it a medium for conveying covert satire on an affair then greatly annoying the King. It is, by the way, due also to Theobald to point out that he has in this same note anticipated Coleridge in distinguishing between the jargon of Edgar as indicating assumed madness and that of Lear as indicating real madness. "What Lear says," remarks Theobald, "for the most part springs either from the source and fountain of his disorder, the injuries done him by his daughters, or his desire of being revenged on them. What Edgar says seems a fantastic wildness only extorted to disguise sense and to blunt the suspicion of his concealment."¹

¹ *Shakspeare* (1st edit.), vol. v. p. 165.

Nor are the sound judgment and good sense of Theobald less conspicuous than his learning. To taunt him with pedantry, the ordinary charge against him, is ridiculous. If his notes are often too verbose and polemical, his sentences loose and perplexed, and his diction too vulgarly colloquial, his matter is generally pertinent and almost always instructive. He never peddles over mere trifles, and "monsters nothings." In explaining obscure or ambiguous passages, one of the most important duties of a commentator on Shakspeare, he is as a rule singularly lucid and intelligent. His note, for example, on the difficult line in *Cymbeline*,—"And make them dreaded, to the doer's thrift,"—is a model of what such notes should be. His punctuation of Shakspeare's text, to which we shall have presently to recur, would in itself refute the sarcasm of Pope, who classes him with those of whom it may be said—

Pains, reading, study are their just pretence,
And all they want is spirit, taste, and sense.

Had Theobald's services extended no further than we have described, he would have been entitled to great respect. But it was not what industry, acquired learning, good taste, and sound judgment enabled him to do that gives him his peculiar place among critics. It was the possession in the highest degree of that fine and rare faculty, if it be not rather an exquisite temper and harmony of various faculties, which seems to admit a critic for a moment into the very sanctuary of genius. In less figurative language,

it is the faculty of divining and recovering, as by the power of some subtle sympathy, the lost touch,—the touch of magic, often in the expression of poetry so precarious and delicate that, dependent on a single word, a stroke of the pen may efface, just as a stroke of the pen may restore it.

We have compared Theobald with Porson. He seems to us to stand in precisely the same relation to Shakspeare as Porson stands to Greek poetry, and more particularly to the Attic dramatists. And they both stand—*par nobile fratrum*—at the head of emendatory criticism in England, not in its application to prose or to any form of expression which is simply prosaic, for in these walks Porson had sometimes a rival in Bentley, and Theobald in Warburton, but in its application to the secrets of poetry. And this of course is the sphere in which emendatory criticism finds its highest exercise. What distinguishes men like Bentley and Warburton from men like Porson and Theobald, in other words what distinguishes mere acuteness and ingenuity in emendatory criticism from genius, is a faculty which has no necessary connection with taste, with poetic sensibility, with imagination, but which depends mainly upon the eye and the memory. The difference in truth between this faculty in its highest and in its lower manifestations is not a difference of degree but a difference of kind. It measures the whole distance between genius and mere cleverness. Let us illustrate. One of the Epigrams of Callimachus (*Epig.* 50) begins thus :—

τὴν ἀλίην Εὐδημος, ἐφ' ἧς ἄλλα λιτὸν ἐπελθὼν
 χεიმῶνας μεγάλους ἐξέφυγεν δανέων
 θῆκε θεοῖς Σαμόθραξι—

which had always been interpreted in this way, "Eudemus dedicated to the gods of Samothrace the ship on which he went over a smooth sea and escaped mighty storms of the Danai" (*i.e.* such storms as the Greek chiefs encountered on their return from Troy, for the perplexed editors had substituted *Δαναῶν* for *δανέων*). Bentley, by the change of one letter, *σ* for *λ*, *i.e.* *ἐπέσθων* for *ἐπελθὼν*, transformed the passage into meaning this, "Eudemus dedicated to the gods of Samothrace the salt-cellar from which he ate frugal salt, and so escaped from the mighty storms of usury," in this case, no doubt—for *ἄλλα λιτὸν* could not possibly mean a *smooth* sea—restoring the true reading. Take another. In the Lexicon of Hesychius (*sub* Ἐναστρος) appeared this gibberish: Ἐναστρος ὥστε μένας, ἀχαιὸς ἀλφεσίβοιαι ἀντὶ τοῦ ἵαστὰς γὰρ βάκχας ἰάδας ἔλεγον. Bentley, by simply changing *ε* into *αι*, restores Ἐναστρος ὥστε Μαινάς· Ἀχαιὸς Ἀλφεσιβοία· ἀντὶ τοῦ Ἵας· τὰς γὰρ βάκχας Ἰάδας ἔλεγον, and thus transforms unintelligible nonsense into a source of valuable information, giving us the title of a drama, the name of its author, and new light on a point of mythology. So again in the Scholia on *Odyssey*, xi. 546, we have this passage—it is referring to Agamemnon's decision as to the relative claims of Ulysses and Ajax to the arms of Achilles: Ἀγαμέμνων. . . . αἰχμαλώτους τῶν Τρώων ἀγαγὼν ἐρώτησεν ὑπὸ ὁποτέρου τῶν Τρώων οἱ Τρῶες μᾶλλον ἐλυπήθησαν, "Agamemnon brought

forward the Trojan captives and asked them from which of the two Trojans they had suffered most injury." This nonsense Barnes had corrected by reading *αὐτῶν οἱ Τρῶες*, but Bentley by the simple substitution of H for T—"from which of the two heroes"—struck out the true reading. And these emendations are typical samples of the quality of his emendations generally. They are the result of mere acuteness. Assuming, as of course we have to do, a knowledge of the classical languages at once exact and immense, we need assume no more than may be found in any conveyancer's office, or in any drudge at Mr. Chabot's or at Mr. Netherclift's. Of inspiration, of refined intelligence, of delicacy of taste, of any trace of sympathy with the essentials of poetry, his emendations are totally devoid. If, as is sometimes the case, they are felicitous—ingenious, that is to say, without violating poetic propriety—it is by pure accident. In many instances they literally beggar burlesque. The sides of his countrymen have long ached with laughter at his transformation of Milton's

Not light but rather darkness visible,

into

Not light but rather a transpicious gloom ;

of

Hell heard the insufferable noise, Hell saw
Heav'n ruining from Heaven,

into

Hell heard the hideous cries and yells. Hell saw
Heav'n tumbling down from Heav'n ;

and his alteration of the concluding lines of *Paradise Lost*—

They hand in hand, with wand'ring steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way,
into

Then hand in hand with social steps their way
Through Eden took, with heavenly comfort cheer'd.¹

¹ The stupidity of Bentley's notes is, if possible, more portentous than his emendations. Take his note in defence of his alteration of this very passage: "Why *wandering*? Erratic steps? Very improper; when, in the line before, they were *guided* by *Providence*. And why *slow*, when Eve professed her readiness and alacrity for the journey? (614). And why their *solitary way*, when even their former walks in Paradise were as solitary as their way now, there being nobody besides them two, both here and there?" Or take again the note in which he justified his emendation of

Thus with the year
Seasons return, but not to me returns
Day or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn.

III. 39-41.

"There must have been a mistake here, *Thus seasons return*? Not a word has been said of it before to give countenance to 'Thus.' From the mention of the nightingale, it seems requisite to alter it thus:—

Tunes her nocturnal note, when with the year
Mild Spring returns.

'Day or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn' can hardly be right: the poor man in so many years' blindness had too much of evening."

But he reaches his climax perhaps in his commentary on the noble lines—

Nor sometimes forget
Those other two equal'd with me in fate,
So were I equal'd with them in renown,
Blind Thamyris and blind Mæonides,
And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old.

Id. 32-36.

"Here we have got the Editor's fist again, for the mark of it is easily discovered. What more ridiculous than to say *those other two*, and afterwards to name *four*. . . . And what occasion to think at times of Tiresias and Phineus, old prophets. Did our poet pretend to prophesy? He might equally think of any other blind men, such as the Romans Appius or Metellus, of true and higher characters than the three he induces here. Add the bad accent, 'And Tiresias,' the tone in the fourth syllable unused and unnatural. To retrieve this passage from the Editor's polluting hand, it may be thus changed, throwing two verses out—

Nor at times forget
The Grecian bard equal'd with me in fate,
O were with him I equal'd in renown."

How poor Homer would have fared at Bentley's hands may be judged by his precious emendation of *Iliad* iii. 196, where he proposed to change *αὐτὸς δὲ κτελος ὥς ἐπιπλωλείται στίχας ἀνδρῶν* into *αὐτὰρ ψιλὸς ἑών*, because the poet had said in the preceding line that the arms of Ulysses were lying on the ground.

Some of his emendations of the Greek poets would have made, we may be sure, a similar impression and have had a similar effect on Pericles and his friends. The greater part of his emendations of Horace would have been received with roars of laughter, not merely in the saloons of the Esquiline, but in the cabin of honest Davus. Take a very few out of very many. In Ode I. xxiii. 5, 6 :—

Nam seu mobilibus veris inhorruit
Adventus foliis.

Here a touch of magically poetic beauty is transformed into flat bald prose by the alteration of *veris* into *vepris*, and *adventus* into *ad ventum*, an emendation as ludicrous as any he has made in Milton. In Ode I. iii. 22—

Nequidquam Deus absceidit
Prudens Oceano dissociabili
Terras—

by altering *dissociabili* into *dissociabilis (es)*, thus separating it from *Oceano* and associating it with *terras*, he deprives an exquisitely felicitous epithet of its propriety. Take, again, Ode III. x. :—

Positas ut glaciæ nives
Puro numine Jupiter.

It might have been thought that the densest critical perception would have appreciated the singularly vivid power of the epithet *puro*, but, alas !—

Turn what they will to verse, their care is vain :
Critics like *these* will make it prose again ;

and *puro* becomes in Bentley's text *duro* ! So again in Ode I. iv., by substituting the variant of the Paris

MS. *visit* for the authentic reading *urit*, a splendidly graphic picture is obliterated and mere inanity takes its place. Thus, too, in Ode III. xxv. 8, 9,

In jugis
Exsomnia stupet Euias,

the magnificently graphic epithet *exsomnia* is altered into *Edonia*, for, as Bentley sagely observes, “Tantum abest ut exsomnia manserint Bacchæ ut præ nimiâ lassitudine frequenter somnus iis obrepserit.” And this statement he gravely proceeds to prove by references to Propertius, Statius, Sidonius, and to the fact that Euripides (*Bacchæ*, 682) distinctly describes them as taking a nap.¹

Warburton’s emendations of Shakspeare are of precisely the same kind. The skill with which he has occasionally corrected passages, where nothing more than mere acuteness was required, was quite compatible with the immense stupidity which has loaded the text of his Shakspeare with emendations of which the following are samples :—

I’ll speak a prophecy *or ere I go*,
(*King Lear*, Act iii. Sc. 2)

altered into

I’ll speak a prophecy *or two afore I go* ;

and

. . . Cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
Do paint the *meadows with delight*,
(*Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Act v. Sc. 2)

altered into

Do paint the *meadows all bedight*.

¹ His emendations of Terence are often equally impertinent and tasteless. For their general character see Hermann’s Dissertation *De Bentley ejusque editione Terentii*.

So, again, in the beautiful lines in *Coriolanus*—

Our veiled dames
Commit the *war* of white and damask in
Their nicely gauded cheeks to the wanton spoil
Of Phæbus' burning kisses—

he alters *war* into *ware*, the commodity, the merchandise, sapiently observing that “the commixture of white and red could not by any figure of speech be called a war, because it is the agreement and union of the colours that make the beauty.” His comments are on a par with his emendations: one sample must suffice. Every one remembers the glorious lines which Antony addresses to Cleopatra—

O thou day o' the world,
Chain mine arm'd neck: leap thou, attire and all,
Through proof of harness to my heart, and there
Ride on the pants triumphing.

“Chain mine arm'd neck” is “an allusion,” observes Warburton, “to the Gothic custom of men of worship wearing gold chains about the neck.” To “ride on the pants triumphing” he appends the following note: “alluding to an Admiral ship on the billows after a storm. The metaphor is extremely fine.”

Let us now turn to Porson and Theobald. In the *Agamemnon* occur these lines. Clytemnestra is describing how she stabbed her husband, and how in his death-throes he spirted over her a gout of dark blood—

βάλλει μ' ἔρεμνῇ ψακάδι φοινίας δρόσου,
χαίρουσαν οὐδὲν ἥσσον, ἢ διὸς νότῳ
γὰν, εἰ σπορητὸς, κάλυκος, ἐν λοχεύμασιν—

a passage plainly corrupt, in rhythm horrible, but out

of which the following meaning may be extracted: "He smites me with a dark-red shower (or gout) of murder-dew (me) greeting it (or perhaps joying in it), not less than the earth in the south wind (or rain) of heaven, when the corn-field (is) in the burstings of the sheath," *i.e.* when the sheaths in which the green ear is enclosed are bursting. By two touches, by substituting through the change of a single letter $\delta\iota\sigma\delta\acute{o}\tau\omega$ for $\delta\iota\delta\acute{o}\varsigma \nu\acute{o}\tau\omega$, and $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\nu\epsilon\iota$ for $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\nu \epsilon\iota$, the magic of Porson restores sense, grammar, rhythm, poetry, glory; and either gives again to the world what Æschylus originally wrote, or gives to Æschylus himself what he would have been proud to accept. And this noble emendation is typical of his emendations generally. Johnson has observed very rightly that "the justness of a happy restoration strikes at once, and the moral precept may be well applied to criticism, 'quod dubitas ne feceris.'" Of no emendations is this more true than of Porson's. Unlike those of such critics as Bentley and Wakefield—for, immeasurable as was Bentley's superiority to Wakefield in point of ability and attainments, in temper and taste he was as rash and coarse—they are seldom or never superfluous. If they do not succeed in satisfying us that the word restored is the exact word lost, they afford us the still higher satisfaction of feeling that nothing which could be recovered could be an improvement on what has been supplied. It is, we think, highly probable that in the *Helena*, 760, Euripides wrote, if not $\omicron\upsilon\delta\acute{\epsilon}\nu \gamma\epsilon$, at least something like it, but we have not the smallest doubt that he would have thanked

Porson, as all his editors have done, for οὐδ' Ἑλενος. Just as in the *Medea*, 293, we feel certain that in substituting στένειν for σθένειν he divined the word which had been lost; as he did also in his substitution of χρεῶν for the comparatively pointless θεῶν in the line—

ὁ χρεὼν γὰρ οὐδεὶς μὴ θεῶν θήσει ποτέ
(*Hercules Furens*, 311).

Whether his exquisite emendation, one of his most felicitous, in the *Medea*, 1015, restored to Euripides what Euripides originally wrote, may perhaps be questioned, but what no one would question is that it is an immense improvement on what the poet did write if the reading of the MSS. be correct. The old text stood,—the Pædagogus is addressing Medea—

θάρσει · κρατεῖς τοι καὶ σὺ πρὸς τέκνων ἔτι

“Courage; thou too art certain still to gain the victory at thy children’s hands.”

Medea replies—

ἄλλους κατάξω πρόσθεν ἢ τάλαιν' ἐγώ

“Before that, I, wretched that I am, shall bring others home.”

Porson, by substituting κάτει, *i.e.* “shalt be brought back by thy sons,” improved the sense, and, associating κάτει with κατάξω, brought out the tragic play on the word. Take another illustration. Hermesianax (*Fragmentum*, 89-91), commenting on the power of love, is giving instances of the great men who had been under its spell, but when he comes to Socrates the text collapses into corruption as follows:—

οὔϕ δ' ἐχλειμμένον ἕξοχον ἐχρῆν . . . εἶναι
πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων Σωκράτη ἐν σοφίῃ
Κύπρις μὴνίονσα πυρὸς μένει.

When this came into Porson's hands conjecture had got as far as οὔϕ δ' ἐχλίηεν, ὄν, and εἶναι Ἀπόλλων. Ἐχρησ' ἀνθρώπων. Two touches of the magic pen and all is clear—

οὔϕ δ' ἐχλίηεν, ὄν ἕξοχον ἔχρη Ἀπόλλων,
ἀνθρώπων εἶναι Σωκράτη ἐν σοφίῃ,
Κύπρις μὴνίονσα πυρὸς μένει.

“With what furious fire did Cypris in her wrath inflame the man whom Apollo pronounced from his shrine to excel all men in wisdom.”

Porson's perception, indeed, of what stupidity, carelessness, or ignorance had disguised or obscured in the text of an ancient poet, resembled clairvoyance. And even when he failed, his fine and delicate sense of the niceties of rhythm, his exquisite taste, his refined good sense, his sobriety, his tact, kept him at least from going far astray, and from making himself and his author ridiculous, as Bentley habitually did.

We have cited some of the best of Porson's emendations as typical of the quality of his work generally as a textual critic. We will at once and for the same purpose cite, placing side by side with Porson's, one of the *palmares emendationes* of Theobald.

In *Henry V.* the passage which all the world knows originally ran thus:—

For after I saw him fumble with the Sheets, and play with Flowers, and smile upon his fingers' end, I knew there was but one way: for his Nose was as sharp as a Pen, and a *Table of greene fields.*

Pope's explanation of this gibberish was that some stage direction had been foisted into the text, as has been the case elsewhere,¹ and omitted it. But Theobald, by the alteration of one letter and the addition of another, flashed out the immortal—

'a babbled of green fields,

thus restoring or presenting to dramatic poetry one of its most precious jewels. To critics of the order of Bentley and Warburton an emendation of this kind could by no possibility have suggested itself. Nor was it a brilliant accident, a diamond in a desert. It was, as we have said, and as we hope to show, significant of the critical genius of Theobald, differing in degree indeed but not in kind from his other characteristic contributions to the recension of Shakspeare's text.

Few people, whose eyes now glide as smoothly and comfortably along the text of Shakspeare as along the text of the Waverley Novels, are aware of the amount of labour which the luxury they are enjoying has involved. Immense as is our debt to those who gave our great poet's works to the world, gratitude for the care with which those works were prepared

¹ Notably in *As You Like It* (Act iv. Sc. 2):—

What shall he have that killed that deer?
His leather skin and horns to wear.
Then sing him home, the rest shall bear this burden,
Take thou no scorn to wear the horn.

So the text ran till Theobald pointed out that the words "the rest shall bear this burden" were a stage direction stupidly incorporated in the text. He contends also, and we believe rightly, that the words "Ring the bell," in Macduff's speech just before the re-entry of Lady Macbeth (*Macbeth*, ii. 3), are similarly to be accounted for.

for the press, and seen through the press, forms no part of it. It would be no exaggeration to say that the text of Shakspeare has come down to us in a worse state than that of any other great author in existence, either in our own or in any other language. That he himself prepared none of his plays for publication is certain; that any of them were printed from his autograph, or even from copies corrected by him, is, in spite of what Heminge and Condell have asserted, open to grave doubt. Of the thirty-seven plays usually assigned to him, seventeen had at various times appeared in quarto, those quartos consisting of transcripts of stage copies surreptitiously obtained without the consent either of the author or of the manager. They have therefore no authority, but are depraved in different degrees by "the alterations and botchery of the players," by interpolations of all kinds and from all sources, and by printers' blunders in every form they can assume, from the corruption or omission of single words to simple revelries of nonsense. About seven years after the poet's death appeared, edited by two of his friends, the authentic edition of his dramas. It contained, with the exception of *Pericles*, all the plays which had been published in quarto, and twenty others then printed, so far as we know, for the first time. Of the manner in which Heminge and Condell discharged their duties as editors, it is not too much to say that a work which might have won for them the unalloyed gratitude of the human race can never be mentioned without indignation. "Perhaps in the whole annals

of English typography," says Hunter, "there is no record of any book of any extent and reputation having been dismissed from the press with less care and attention than the first folio."¹ Bad as most of the quartos are, the first folio is often worse. In some places its text is simply the text of the quartos, retaining faithfully the old blunders and corruptions, with additional blunders and corruptions peculiar to itself. Words, the restoration of which is obvious, left unsupplied; unfamiliar words transliterated into gibberish; punctuation as it pleases chance; sentences with the subordinate clauses higgledy-piggledy or upside down; lines transposed; verse printed as prose, and prose as verse; speeches belonging to one character given to another; stage directions incorporated in the text; actors' names suddenly substituted for those of the *dramatis personæ*; scenes and acts left unindicated or indicated wrongly—all this and more make the text of the first folio one of the most portentous specimens of typography and editing in existence. In the second folio, which is little more than a reprint, page for page, of the first, the attempts of the editor at amendment served only to make confusion, if possible, worse confounded, and to pollute the text with further corruptions. Of the editors of the third and fourth folios, which are reprints respectively of the second and third, it may be said generally that they contributed little or nothing to the purification of the text, but contented themselves for the most part with modernising the spelling.

¹ Preface to *New Illustrations of Shakspeare*, p. iv.

Then came Rowe, the first editor in the proper sense of the term. His edition is a revised reprint of the fourth folio. He did something, but he did very little. He was the first to prefix a list of *dramatis personæ* to many of the plays, and to supply the defects of the folios in dividing and numbering the Acts and Scenes. But as a textual critic he effected nothing which entitles him to particular notice. He corrected here and there a palpable blunder; he made a few conjectures.

Rowe was succeeded by Pope. With a few happy emendations, and with a singularly interesting and well-written Preface, begins and ends all that is of any value in Pope's work as an editor of Shakspeare. For the correction of the text he did as little as Rowe. To its corruption he contributed more than any other eighteenth-century editor, with the exception, perhaps, of Warburton. He professed to have based his text on a careful collation of the quartos and folios. Nothing can be more certain than that his text is based simply on Rowe's, and that he seldom troubled himself to consult either the quartos or the folios. In "correction" his process is simple. If he cannot understand a word, he substitutes a word which he can: if a phrase is obscure to him, he rewrites it. He finds, for instance, in *Timon of Athens* (Act ii. Sc. 2)—

I have retir'd me to a *wasteful cock*,

and he turns it into

I have retir'd me to a *lonely room*.

So in *Richard III.* (Act iv. Sc. 1)—

And each day's hour wreak'd with a week of *teen*,

he turns *teen* into *anguish*, though the word rhymes with "seen" in the preceding line. Often, however, he does not give himself this trouble. What he finds unintelligible he leaves unintelligible; what he finds gibberish he leaves gibberish. He excises at discretion, sometimes because a passage appears to be desperately corrupt, sometimes because a passage is not, in his judgment, worthy of the poet. It is never pleasant to expose the defects of a great man, and we shall not, therefore, give further specimens of the kind of corrections he was in the habit of making, or any examples at all of the ignorance displayed in his explanatory notes.

Let us now turn to Theobald. Before proceeding to his particular emendations, we will give one comprehensive example of his skill in textual recension, of the state in which he found the text of long passages, of the skill with which he restored them. Towards the end of the first Act of *Hamlet*, the text of the following passage runs thus in the first folio :—

But come,
 Here as before, neuer so helpe you mercy,
 How strange or odde so ere I beare myself ;
 (As I perchance heerafter shall thinke meet
 To put an Anticke disposition on :)
 That you at such time seeing me, neuer shall
 With Armes encombred thus, or thus, head shake ;
 Or by pronouncing of some doubtfull Phrase ;
 As well, we know, or we could and if we would,
 Or if we list to speake ; or there be and if there might,
 Or such ambiguous giuing out to note,

That you know ought of me ; this not to doe :
 So grace and mercy at your moste neede helpe you :
 Sweare.

Now see how, with a very little assistance from the quartos, this nonsense left his hands :—

But come,
 Here, as before, never, (so help you mercy !)
 How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself,
 (As I, perchance, hereafter shall think meet
 To put an antic disposition on ;)
 That you, at such time seeing me, never shall
 With arms encumbered thus, or this head-shake,
 Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
 As, well—we know—or, we could, and if we would—
 Or, if we list to speak—or, there be, and if there might—
 (Or such ambiguous giving out) denote
 That you know aught of me ; This do ye swear,
 So grace and mercy at your most need help you !
 Swear.

All that Pope had professed to do Theobald faithfully did. A careful collation of the folios and quartos enabled him in innumerable cases to restore the right reading without resorting to conjectural emendation. A list of the passages which he has thus certainly and finally corrected would in itself be a monument of his critical tact and conscientious industry. No critic, indeed, is more conservative, and has so seldom sought to obtain credit for his own skill when that skill was unnecessary. In one of his letters to Warburton he says, in words which all who may be engaged in textual recension would do well to remember, “I ever labour to make the smallest deviations that I possibly can from the text : never to alter at all where I can by any means explain a passage into sense ; nor ever by any emendations to

make the author better when it is probable the text came from his own hands.”¹ What Cicero observed of Aristarchus, “Homeri versus negasse quos ipse non probaverit,” may unhappily be said with equal justice, not only of Pope, but of more than one recent editor of Shakspeare.

The truth, of course, is that Pope had mistaken his vocation. He was as ill qualified to compete with Theobald in the particular walk in which Theobald excelled, as Theobald would have been to compete with him in poetry. He could produce masterpieces, ten couplets from any of which would, as contributions to the intellectual wealth of mankind, far outweigh all the achievements of verbal criticism from Aristarchus downwards. The subject for regret is that he should not only have wasted his time in doing badly what smaller men could do well, but that, a very Cræsus himself, he should have stooped to the meanness of attempting to rob a poor neighbour of his treasure.

But to turn to Theobald’s emendations. Nothing could be more exquisite than this. In a line in *Timon of Athens* (Act iv. Sc. 3) there is this nonsense :—

Those milk-paps,
That through the *window Barne* bore at men’s eyes.

Theobald, quoting from Ben Jonson and others, shows that it was customary for women to wear lawn coverings over their necks and bosoms (Agrippina, in Ben Jonson, indeed saying, “Transparent as this lawn I wear”), and emends *window-lawn*, *i.e.* lawn

¹ Nichols’ *Illustrations of Literature*, vol. ii. p. 210.

transparent as a window. Place this beside the other emendation, *window-bars*, adopted by Dr. Johnson and others, and compare Johnson's explanatory note, "The virgin that shows her bosom through the lattice of her chamber." Could anything equal the prosaic and grotesque grossness of this image, or the voluptuous beauty of the picture restored by Theobald? Theobald's exquisite emendation finds, it may be added, both support and illustration in Phineas Fletcher's *Purple Island*, canto ii. stanza 8 :—

As when a virgin her snow-circ'd breast
 Displaying hides, and hiding sweet displays ;
 The greater segments cover'd, and the rest
 The veil transparent willingly displays :
 Thus takes and gives, thus lends and borrows light
 Lest eyes should surfeit with too greedy sight
Transparent lawns with-hold, more to increase delight.

In *Antony and Cleopatra* (Act i. Sc. 4) occur the lines—

Like to a Vagabond Flagge upon the Streame,
 Goes too, and backe, *lacking* the varrying tyde
 To rot itselfe with motion.

This Rowe or Pope altered to *lashing*. Theobald altering this into *lacquying*, gave us back one of the finest onomatopœic lines in Shakspeare—

̄ ̄ ̣ ̄ ̄ ̣ ̣ ̣ ̄ ̣ ̣ ̄
 Goes to and back *lacquying* the varrying tide.

In *Coriolanus* (Act ii. Sc. 1) was this nonsense :
 "What harm can your *besom* conspicuities glean out of this character?" Theobald emended *bisson*, *i.e.* purblind, quoting in support of it *Hamlet*, Act ii. Sc. 2 :—

Threatening the flames
 With *bisson* rheum.

In *Romeo and Juliet* (Act i. Sc. 2), in the lines—

Ere he can spread his sweet leaves to the air
Or dedicate his beauty to the *same*—

by a beautiful touch he restored *sun*.

The passage in *Twelfth Night* (Act i. Sc. 3)—

Sir And. Would that have mended thy hair ?
Sir Toby. Past question, for thou seest it will not *cool my nature*—

Theobald corrected *curl by nature*, supporting the certain emendation by a reference to Sir Toby's next speech, "it hangs like flax on a distaff."

In *Macbeth* (Act i. Sc. 7) he transformed "The bank and *school* of time" into the magnificent "bank and *shoal* of time"; and again, in the same play (Act iii. Sc. 2), "We have *scorch'd* the snake, not killed it," into *scotch'd*, *i.e.* hacked, showing, by a reference to *Coriolanus* (Act iv. Sc. 5), that Shakespeare had used the word elsewhere. Again, too, in the same play (Act i. Sc. 1), "The *weyward* sisters hand in hand," into *weird*. "Rebellious *Head* rise never" (Act iv. Sc. 1), for *Dead*, was also a happy restoration. "He *shent* our messengers," for *sent*, restores sense to a passage in *Troilus and Cressida* (Act ii. Sc. 3); as also does "*give* to dust" for "*go* to dust" in a fine passage (Act iii. Sc. 3) so desperate that Pope threw it out :—

And go to dust, that is a little gilt,
More laud than gilt o'er-dusted.

In *Antony and Cleopatra* (Act v. Sc. 3) the lines—

A sun and moon which kept their course and lighted
The little o' the earth—

he restored to sense and metre by substituting for a small a capital O, and showing by quotation from *Henry V.* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that the capital O was used to signify a circle. In the same passage he restored *autumn* for *Antonie*—

An *Antonie* 'twas
That grew the more by reaping.

Some singularly felicitous corrections are made simply by separating letters, as in *Richard III.* (Act iv. Sc. 4)—

Advantaging their loan with interest,
Oftentimes double gain of happiness—

where he improves both sense and metre by reading *Of ten times*; so, too, a difficult passage in *Henry V.* (Act iv. Sc. 3), “mark then *abounding* valour in these English” is made perfectly clear, as the context shows, by his reading of *a bounding*. And in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act iv. Sc. 1)—

Fairies be gone and be *all ways* away,

for the nonsensical *always*. In the lines in the same play—

Then my queen in silence sad,
Trip we after the night's shade—

by substituting a semicolon for a comma, and *fade* (which he supports by a happy quotation from *Hamlet*, “it *faded* at the crowing of the cock”) for *sad*, he restores the rhyme, and turns nonsense into sense. A few lines above, in the same play, “all these *fine* the sense” he alters into *five*, and darkness becomes light.

In *Measure for Measure* (Act iv. Sc. 2), Rowe and Pope, finding in the old copies, "you shall find me *y'are*," could make nothing of it, and read *yours*; but Theobald, by striking out the apostrophe and making it one word, restored the true reading *yare*, *i.e.* ready. In *Much Ado about Nothing* (Act v. Sc. 1) was this nonsense—

If such an one will smile and stroke his beard,
And sorrow, wagge, cry hem when he should groan,

which Theobald transforms into sense by reading, "And sorrow wage, cry hem," etc., *i.e.* strive against sorrow, illustrating Shakspeare's use of the word *wage* in this sense by references to *Lear*, *Othello*, the first part of *Henry IV.* thus conclusively settling the text. So in the preceding Act, in "Yea, marry, that's the *eftest* way," which Rowe and Pope had altered into *easiest*, he at once restores the true reading by suggesting *deftest*. So again in *Love's Labour's Lost* (Act. iv. Sc. 3)—

A lover's ear will hear the lowest sound
When the suspicious head of *theft* is stopp'd :

he turns nonsense into sense by reading *thrift*, rightly contending that the typical thief is as likely to sleep as soundly as an honest man, but that the sleep of a miser is likely to be broken and disturbed through fear of being robbed. In two passages, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Act ii. Sc. 2), he has restored the right word *wood*, *i.e.* mad, where no one had detected it: "Oh that she could speak like a *would-woman*," as the folios had it,—“like an

ould-woman," as Pope ridiculously altered it; as also in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Act iv. Sc. 4), "the action of a *would* woman." Nothing could be happier than his emendation of *harts* for *hearts* in *Cymbeline*, "Our Britain's *Hearts* die flying," not our men (Act iv. Sc. 3); "drink up *eisel*" (*i.e.* vinegar), for the unintelligible *Esile* of the folio, "Drink up *Esile*, eat a crocodile" (*Hamlet*, Act v. Sc. 1); "sound *one* into the drowsy race of night" for "sound *on*" (*King John*, Act iii. Sc. 3); "*again* to inflame it," for the ridiculous *a game*, "When the blood is made dull there should be *again* to inflame it . . . loveliness in favour," etc. (*Othello*, Act ii. Sc. 1); "a *Cain-coloured* beard," for *cane-coloured* (*Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act i. Sc. 3); "in that *tire*," for *time* (*Id.* Act iv. Sc. 3); "so is Alcides beaten by his *page*" for "so is Alcides beaten by his *rage*" (*Merchant of Venice*, Act ii. Sc. 1); "you Gods, I *prate*," for "you Gods, I *pray*" (*Coriolanus*, Act v. Sc. 3); "*baillez* me, some paper" (spoken by Caius), for the gibberish "*ballow* me, some paper"; "within the house is *Jove*," for the pointless *Love* (*Much Ado about Nothing*, Act v. Sc. 2): "some Dick that smiles his cheek in *jeers*," for the senseless "smiles his cheek in *years*" (*Love's Labour's Lost*, Act v. Sc. 2); "I see the mystery of your *loneliness*" for *loveliness* (*All's Well that Ends Well*, Act i. Sc. 3); "*mounting* sire," for *mountain*, "Whiles that his mountain sire on mountain standing" (*Henry V.*, Act ii. Sc. 4); "their *bon's*, their *bon's*," for the absurd *their bones*, "these fashion-mongers, these perdona mi's . . . O

their bones, their bones!" (*Romeo and Juliet*, Act ii. Sc. 4); "was, beastly, *dumb'd*," for *dumb*—

Who neigh'd so high that what I would have spoke
Was beastly dumb by him.

(*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act i. Sc. 5).

"*Ne'er* lust-wearied Antony," for *near* (*Id.* Act ii. Sc. 1). An admirable emendation restores sense and improves metre in *Othello*, Act iv. Sc. 1—

as names be such abroad,
Who having, by their own importunate suit,
Or voluntary dotage of some mistress,
Convinced or supplied them, they cannot choose
But they must blab.

Theobald corrects "convinc'd or *supplied* them."

Again, in *Titus Andronicus* (Act iii. Sc. 2), the insertion of a single letter converts nonsense into sense; for *doings* in the line—

And buzz lamenting *doings* in the air,

he reads *dolings*. So in *King John* (Act v. Sc. 2), "This *unhaired* sauciness and boyish troops" was a certain correction for *unheard*. Nothing could be more exquisitely felicitous than one of his emendations in *Henry VI.* (Part II. Act iii. Sc. 2):—

To sit and *watch* me as Ascanius did,
When he to madding Dido, etc.

This he corrects—and *vide quid faciat unius litterulæ mutatio*, he might have said with Porson—"To sit and *watch* me."

Nor are his emendations of the Poems of Shakespeare less happy. They may be found in Jortin's *Miscellaneous Observations*, to which they were

contributed, vol. ii. p. 242 *seq.* In *Lucrece*, 1062, he found—

This bastard *grass* shall never come to growth,
He shall not boast who did thy stock pollute.

The change of two letters restored the right reading, “this bastard *graft*.” In Sonnet LXVII. was this unintelligible passage—

Look, what thy memory cannot contain,
Commit to these waste *blacks*.

Quoting a preceding line in the same Sonnet,

The vacant leaves thy mind’s imprint will bear,

and the lines in *Twelfth Night*,

What’s her history ?
A *blank*, my lord,

he corrected—

Commit to these waste *blanks*.

In Sonnet LXV. he finds—

Shall Time’s best jewel from Time’s *chest* be hid ?

and, observing that “a jewel hid from a chest” is something new, corrects—

From Time’s *quest* be hid.

A passage in *Venus and Adonis*, 1013-14—

Tell him of trophies, statues, tombs, and stories,
His victories, his triumphs, and his glories,—

he restores to sense by placing a semicolon after *tombs*, for which he would read *domes*, and making *stories* a verb governing the substantives in the next line, quoting in support of his correction the line—

He stories to her ears her husband’s fame.

So conservative was Theobald, and so conscientiously did he abstain from what he thought were unnecessary or uncertain corrections, that he refrained from introducing into the text some emendations so admirable that other editors have not scrupled to adopt them. Thus, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Act ii. Sc. 1), for the unintelligible word *An-heires*, "Will you go, *An-heires*?" he conjectured, and no doubt rightly, *Mynheers*, *i.e.* "Sirs," a conjecture supported by a passage, as Dyce points out, in Fletcher's *Beggar's Bush*: "Nay, Sir, mineheire Van Dunck is a true statesman." So, too, in *All's Well that Ends Well* (Act v. Sc. 3), for *blade*, in the line "Natural rebellion done i' the *blade* of youth," he conjectured *blaze*, but left the original reading. So again in *Love's Labour's Lost* (Act iii. Sc. 1), he suggested that the line referring to Cupid,

This signior Junio's giant-dwarf, Dan Cupid,

might be emended, "This *senior-junior, giant-dwarf*," but would not disturb the text. So again in *Othello* (Act iii. Sc. 3), in the lines—

Beware, my lord, of jealousy,
It is the green-eyed monster which doth *mock*
The meat it feeds on,—

for *mock* he proposed *make*; an admirable emendation, which he did not introduce into his text, and for which every editor—and the majority of the editors have adopted it—has given Hammer the credit. Thus, too, in *Troilus and Cressida* (Act iv. Sc. 5), for the unintelligible

O these encounters
That give *a coasting* welcome ere it comes,

he proposed *accosting*, *i.e.* "give welcome to a salute ere it comes"; an excellent correction, supported, though he does not notice it, by *Twelfth Night* (Act i. Sc. 3), "Accost, Sir Andrew, accost." Of the many certain corrections which his knowledge of the Elizabethan dramatist enabled him to make, we have an example in *Much Ado about Nothing* (Act iii. Sc. 2), where he shows conclusively, by pertinent references to passages in Beaumont and Fletcher, that the word "she shall be buried with her *face* upward," must be altered into *heels*. The consummate skill with which he has, in innumerable passages, by transpositions, by changed punctuation, and by supplying what had dropped out, restored the right reading, and turned nonsense into sense, we have only space to illustrate by one specimen. In *All's Well that Ends Well* (Act i. Sc. 3), he found this gibberish:—

Fortune, she said, was no goddess . . . Love, no god, that would not extend his might where qualities were level . . . Queen of Virgins that would suffer her poor knight, etc.

This he transforms, by proper punctuation and the restoration of the missing words, into perfect sense: "Love no god, that would not extend his might, only where qualities were level. *Diana*, no queen of virgins that would suffer," etc. But his most brilliant achievement is the restoration of the passage in *Hamlet* (Act i. Sc. 4), beginning, "Ay, marry is't," and ending "to his own scandal," a mass, for the

most part, of unintelligible jargon in the quartos. What, for example, could be more desperate than the last three lines of this passage as they came into Theobald's hands?—

The dram of eale
Doth all the noble substance of a doubt
To his own scandle.

For this he proposed to read—

The dram of base
Doth all the noble substance of worth out

(i.e. extinguishes); supporting his emendation by *Cymbeline* (Act iii. Sc. 5)—

From whose so many weights of baseness cannot
A dram of worth be drawn.

And scarcely less admirable is his restoration of the passage in *Coriolanus* (Act i. Sc. 9), beginning, "May these same instruments." An excellent instance of his sagacity—we are by no means sure that he is right—will be found in his note on the passage at the end of *Timon*, contending that the punctuation of the lines—

Rich conceit
Taught thee to make vast Neptune weep for aye
On thy low grave, on faults forgiven,—

should be altered into

On thy low grave.—On : faults forgiven,

supposing that Alcibiades is suddenly addressing the senators. And this he supports by Antony's—

On ;—things that are past are done with me
(*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act i. Sc. 2),

and by observing that Alcibiades' speech is in breaks

between his reflections on Timon's death and his addresses to the Athenian senators.

But no portion of Theobald's work is more interesting than his illustrations, which are always singularly pertinent and happy. If mere accumulations of parallel passages, where the parallels resemble that which Fluellen drew between Macedon and Monmouth, are as worthless as they are irritating, in parallel illustration judiciously employed critical commentary finds its most useful instrument. And not this alone. The revelation of identity of sentiments, of common deductions from observation or experience, of the notification of the same traits and peculiarities in nature, in life, in manners, among writers of different ages and of different tempers, is a source, not merely of curious, but assuredly of intelligent pleasure. Of Theobald's felicitous illustrations a few specimens must suffice. With the line in *King Lear* (Act iv. Sc. 6)—

O undistinguish'd space of woman's will

—a line admirably explained by him—he compares Sancho's remark in *Don Quixote* (Part II., bk. i., chap. ii.), “Entre el *Si* y el *No* de la mugér, no me atrevería yo á poner una punta d'alfilér” (“Between a woman's Yea and No I would not undertake to thrust a pin's point”). And to Imogen's remark—

You put me to forget a lady's manners
By being so verbal (*Cymbeline*, Act ii. Sc. 3)—

he at once supplies the best commentary,

γύναι, γυναιξὶ κόσμον ἢ σιγῇ φέρει
(Sophocles, *Ajax*, 205);

as he does also to Boyet's remark in *Love's Labour's Lost* (Act ii. Sc. 1)—

Be now as prodigal of all dear grace
As Nature was in making graces dear,
When she did starve the general world beside,
And prodigally gave them all to you,—

by comparing Catullus (*Epigrams*, 87)—

Quæ cum pulcherrima tota est,
Tum omnibus una omnes surripuit vneres.

So, again, for the lines in *Henry V.* (Act i. Sc. 2)—

For government, though high and low and lower,
Put into parts, doth keep in one consent,
Congreeing in a full and natural close
Like music,—

he gives us the proper commentary by quoting Cicero (*De Republica*, ii. 42):—

Sic ex summis et infimis et mediis et interjectis ordinibus,
ut sonis, moderatâ ratione civitas consensu dissimillimorum con-
cinit; et quæ harmonia a musicis dicitur in cantu, ea est in
civitate concordia.

The words of Ventidius in *Antony and Cleopatra*
(Act iii. Sc. 1)—

O Silius, Silius,
I've done enough. A lower place, note well,
May make too great an act; for learn this, Silius,
Better to leave undone, than by our deed
Acquire too high a fame, when he we serve's away—

he most happily furnishes with the best of illustrations
by quoting Antipater's behaviour with regard to
Alexander the Great:—

Et quanquam fortuna rerum placebat, invidiam tamen, quia
maiores res erant quam quas Præfecti modus caperet, metuebat.
Quippe Alexander hostes vinci voluerat: Antipatrum vicisse ne
tacitus quidem dignabatur: suæ demptum gloriæ existimans

quicquid cessisset alienæ. Itaque Antipater, qui probe nosset spiritum ejus, non est ausus ipse agere arbitria victoriæ (Quintus Curtius, lib. vi. c. 1).

So again, in *Much Ado about Nothing* (Act i. Sc. 1), he cites Plautus (*Mostellaria*, i. 111) to interpret the point of Beatrice's remark, "It is so, indeed: he is no less than a stuff man, but for the stuffing,—well, we are all mortal"—"Non vestem amatores mulieris amant, sed vestis fartum." His notes are, indeed, a storehouse of the most felicitous illustrations of Shakspeare's images, sentiments, and thoughts, drawn from the whole range of the Greek and Roman classics, illustrations which have been appropriated without a word of acknowledgment by succeeding generations of commentators.

What the text of Shakspeare, as it is now generally accepted, owes to Theobald, may be judged from this. The most popular, but at the same time the most conservative of the texts, so conservative indeed that it often retains the unintelligible readings of the quartos and folios in preference to the most plausible of Theobald's conjectures, is the "Globe" Shakspeare. Now we find on collating this text with Theobald's that, without taking into account the innumerable instances in which it adopts from the quartos and folios the readings selected by Theobald, it follows Theobald's own conjectures, corrections, and regulations in no less than three hundred and nine passages.¹

¹ Tabulated, the account thus stands:—*The Tempest*, 8; *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 12; *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 14; *Merry Wives of Windsor*, 11; *Measure for Measure*, 6; *Comedy of Errors*, 9; *Much Ado about Nothing*, 9;

Of Theobald himself very little is certainly known. What little we do know of him is derived from Nichols' *Illustrations of Literature*.¹ He was born at Sittingbourne in Kent in March 1688,² the son of a solicitor of that town. He was placed under the tuition of a Rev. Mr. Ellis at Isleworth, who, to judge from the accomplishments of his pupil, must have been a very efficient teacher, for it does not appear that Theobald received any further instruction. Removing subsequently to London, he was apprenticed to the law, but soon abandoned the law for literature. His first work was a translation of the *Phædo* of Plato, which appeared in May 1713. In the April of the following year he entered into a contract with Lintot to translate the *Odyssey*, four of the tragedies of Sophocles, and the *Satires* and *Epistles* of Horace. For some reason this contract was not fulfilled, but between 1714 and the end of 1715 he published translations of the *Electra*, *Ajax*, and *Œdipus Rex* in verse, and of the *Plutus* and the *Clouds* in prose. In addition to these works he produced between 1715 and 1726 several plays, operas, pantomimes, and miscellaneous poems, which are of no value or interest. We have

Love's Labour's Lost, 24; *Merchant of Venice*, 6; *As You Like It*, 6; *Taming of the Shrew*, 10; *All's Well that Ends Well*, 13; *Twelfth Night*, 4; *A Winter's Tale*, 5; *King John*, 7; *Richard II.*, 1; two parts of *Henry the Fourth*, 9; three parts of *Henry the Sixth*, 11; *Richard III.*, 3; *Henry VIII.*, 9; *Troilus and Cressida*, 13; *Coriolanus*, 22; *Titus Andronicus*, 6; *Romeo and Juliet*, 10; *Timon of Athens*, 10; *Julius Caesar*, 6; *Macbeth*, 14; *Hamlet*, 8; *King Lear*, 2; *Othello*, 7; *Antony and Cleopatra*, 21; *Cymbeline*, 13. In the less conservative texts the number would, no doubt, be considerably higher.

¹ Vol. ii. pp. 707-748.

² "About 1692," say Nichols and the biographers. But he was baptized on the 2nd of April 1688, as the parish register testifies. I owe this information to the courtesy of the Vicar of Sittingbourne.

already given an account of what brought him into collision with Pope, and of his relations with Warburton. The wrath of the sensitive poet had found expression before the publication of the *Dunciad*, and he had attacked his critic where, it must be owned, his critic was sufficiently vulnerable. In the *Treatise on the Bathos* poor Theobald had been pilloried with other unfortunate poetasters, and though he was not perhaps responsible for the famous "none but himself can be his parallel," it raised the laugh against him for the rest of his life. Bentley has justly observed that no man was ever written down except by himself, but poverty and ridicule are formidable adversaries. It was Theobald's lot to have to subordinate the work in which nature had qualified him to excel to the work for which nature had never intended him, and to lose more in reputation by his scribblings for Grub Street than he could recover by his contributions to scholarship and criticism. What he could do well appealed during his lifetime to a very small minority; what he could only do badly appealed to the generality. He was thus in the cruel position of a man compelled to illustrate the truth of Bentley's remark, not indeed in the sense of doing inefficiently what it was in his power to do well, but in producing under compulsion what he ought never to have attempted at all. He belonged to a class of men who are or who ought to be the peculiar care of the friends of learning. Men of letters who have sufficient abilities to justify them in pursuing their calling can make their own way

without patronage, but it is not so with the pure scholar and the philological critic. Their sphere is as confined as it is important. Their labour is labour which must inevitably keep them poor. But no friend of learning held out a helping hand to poor Theobald. He qualified himself for the production of his monumental work, he collected the materials for it, he completed it, while preserving himself and his family from starvation by scribbling those bad plays and worse poems which enabled his enemies to make havoc of his reputation.

In 1730, on the death of Eusden, he became a candidate for the Laureateship, but, though he was supported in his application by Sir Robert Walpole and Frederick Prince of Wales, he was not successful. In the following year he had an opportunity for displaying his abilities as a Grecian. Jortin, with the assistance of two of the most eminent scholars of that time, Joseph Wasse and Zachary Pearce, published the first number of a periodical entitled *Miscellaneous Observations on Authors, Ancient and Modern*. To this Theobald communicated some emendations of Eustathius, Suidas, and Athenæus, with critical remarks, and Jortin was so pleased with them that he not only inserted them but added in an editorial note, "I hope the gentleman to whom I am indebted for these will give me opportunities of obliging the public with more of his observations." But poor Theobald had other work to do.

He survived the publication of his Shakspeare a

little more than ten years, during which his life appears to have been a dreary struggle with misfortune and poverty, and at last with severe disease. Of his death and burial a touching account has been preserved by Nichols, and from this it would seem that in his latter days he was solitary and almost friendless. "He was of a generous spirit,"—so writes the only person who followed him to his grave in St. Pancras Churchyard,—“too generous for his circumstances, and none knew how to do a handsome thing, or confer a benefit, when in his power, with a better grace than himself. He was my ancient friend of near thirty years’ acquaintance. Interred at Pancras, the 20th, 6 o’clock P.M. I only attended him.” The date indicated was the 20th of September 1744. But, as “*nullum tempus regi occurrit*” is a maxim of our law, so, surely, ought “*nullum tempus justitiæ occurrit*” to be a maxim of duty, and especially of the duty which the living owe to the dead. The proper monument of Theobald is not that cairn of dishonour which the sensitive vanity of Pope, the ignoble and impudent devices of Warburton to build his own reputation on the ruin of another, the careless injustice of Johnson, the mean stratagems of Malone, and the obsequious parrotry of tradition on the part of subsequent writers, have succeeded in accumulating. It is the settled text of Shakspeare. It should be the gratitude of all to whom that text is precious, the gratitude of civilised mankind.

MENANDER

“I LOVE Menander next to Sophocles. He is everywhere genuine, noble, sublime, and cheerful; his grace and sweetness are unequalled. It is greatly to be lamented that we have so little of his, but that little is invaluable, men of genius may learn so much from it.” The speaker was Goethe.¹ The loss indeed which the world has sustained in the destruction of the comedies of Menander is little less than the loss it would have sustained had Roman literature been robbed of Horace, had French literature been deprived of Molière, had the Germans lost their Schiller, had a few fragments represented all that remained to Englishmen of *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Much Ado about Nothing*. It is a loss to which there is nothing comparable in the history of letters. His comedies were the masterpieces of a literature which has for more than two thousand years maintained a proud pre-eminence among the literatures of the world, and they were placed by general consent at the head of a department of art in which that literature particularly excelled. His merit is so great, says

¹ *Gespräche mit Goethe*, von Johann Peter Eckermann, vol. i. pp. 217, 218.

Quintilian, that his fame has swallowed up that of all other authors in the same walk, and they are obscured with the effulgence of his lustre.¹ His invention, we are told, was boundless ; his wit and humour inexhaustible. His acquaintance with life in all its manifold phases was the wonder of the ancient world. "O Menander and Life!" rapturously exclaims Aristophanes the grammarian, "which of you copied the other?"² So rich, moreover, were his writings in that practical wisdom which is the fruit of experience and reflection, that upwards of a thousand aphorisms have been collected from them. Many of these are no doubt spurious, and many belong to other poets, but, after making ample deductions, enough remain to prove how greatly literature is indebted to his wit and his wisdom. It would scarcely be too much to say that he has contributed more than any single writer of antiquity, not even excepting Euripides, to that stock of proverbs and pithy truths which have long since lost their identity, and become the common property of mankind.

His style and diction were, we are told, almost faultless. They illustrated in its perfection that wonderful language which still remains the noblest and most perfect expression of human speech ; they developed even further the resources of that dialect which had already been sufficient for the purposes

¹ *Inst. Orat.* x. 1.

² "ὦ Μένανδρε καὶ βίε,
πότερος ἄρ' ὑμῶν πότερον ἐμμήσατο ;

of the tragic dramatists, of Aristophanic comedy, of Platonic dialectic. "His phrase," says Plutarch, "is so well turned and contempered with itself that, while it traverses many passions and humours, and is adapted to all sorts of persons, it still appears the same, and even maintains its semblance in trite, familiar, and everyday expressions." In subtlety of style Pliny pronounces him to be without a rival.¹ After Homer, he appears to have been the most universally read and appreciated of all the writers of antiquity. An inscription on one of his statues calls him the Siren of the Stage. The Greek and Roman critics vie with one another in extolling him. Aristophanes the grammarian ranked him as second only to Homer. Plutarch has informed us that at banquets his comedies were as indispensable as the wine,² and that to announce one of his plays for exhibition was to fill the theatre with a crowded audience of educated men.³ Lynceus, Aristophanes the grammarian, Latinus, Plutarch, and Silius Homerus wrote essays and commentaries on his works. Athenæus is never weary of quoting him. Dion Chrysostom preferred him to all the old masters of the stage—"and let none of our wise men," he adds, "reprehend my choice, as Menander's art in delineating the various manners and graces is more to be esteemed than all the force and vehemence of the ancient drama."⁴ Not only were Cæcilius, Afranius, Plautus, and Terence his disciples

¹ "Menander litterarum subtilitate sine æmulo genitus" (*Nat. Hist.* xxx. c. 1; Plutarch, *Aristophanis et Menandri Comp.* ii.)

² *Symposium*, vii. 3.

³ *Aristophanis et Menandri Comp.* iii.

⁴ *Orat.* xviii.

and translators, but the allusions made to him by Horace (whose *Epistles* are the nearest approach which have ever been made to the peculiar excellences of his style) and the elegiac poets prove that his comedies must have been as familiar to the Romans as the plays of Shakspeare are to a well-educated Englishman of the present day. Quintilian has exhausted the language of panegyric in discussing his merits. A modern reader would find it difficult to imagine a style more copious, ductile, and perspicuous than that of Aristophanes, and yet Plutarch informs us that even in these points the Lord of the Old Comedy must yield to Menander. The grace and felicity which characterise the diction of Terence have time out of mind been proverbial among scholars; his pathos has drawn tears from the eyes of less sensitive readers than Erasmus and Addison; his refined and delicate humour was the delight of the ancient as it has been the delight of the modern world. Yet, out of his six comedies, the four best are mere adaptations, perhaps simply translations, from Menander. And a Roman has recorded the opinion of his countrymen when they compared their comedies with the divine originals. The work of their own poets was felt to be cold and inanimate; its wit paled, its brilliance lost its glamour; it looked mean and poor; it bore the same relation to its Greek prototype as a plaster cast bears to the mobile features of life. The lines ascribed to Julius Cæsar are well known, and merely express in other words what is expressed in the criticism of Aulus

Gellius.¹ The judgment of Quintilian was similar—"we have not even the shadow of the Greek excellence in comedy," *vix levem consequimur umbram*.²

The high estimate formed of Menander by the ancients is in truth amply borne out by the fragments which have been spared to us, and these fragments, thanks to the industry of Hertelius, Henry Stephens, Gyraldus, Grotius, and pre-eminently of Augustus Meineke, are by no means inconsiderable. Meineke has succeeded in collecting upwards of two thousand verses—the *disjecta membra* of more than a hundred comedies. With that scrupulous accuracy and patient devotion which seem to be the almost exclusive prerogative of German editors, that eminent scholar has scrutinised every corner of Greek and Latin literature for traces and relics of his favourite. No source has been left unexplored, no promising manuscript unransacked. Through the wide domain of the classics proper, through the dreary subtleties of Alexandrian metaphysics, through the wastes of patristic theology and the vast saharas of Byzantine literature—wherever it was possible that a paragraph, a line, nay, even a word of Menander could lurk, has that indefatigable commentator travelled.

With the aid of Meineke, it is still possible to form some conception of the character and work of

¹ Aulus Gellius, ii. 23. The particular comparison instituted is between Cæcilius and Menander, but the beginning of the chapter shows that his criticism applied generally to all the Roman comic poets whose work was based on Greek originals. Some of the Romans, it should be remembered, placed Cæcilius above Terence, as Cicero was inclined to do.—Cf. *De Optimo Genere Oratorum*, i. 1.

² *Instit. Orat.* x. 1.

this great master, with whom Time has dealt so hardly. We can catch glimpses of the matchless beauty of his style; we can discern that worldly wisdom and practical sagacity for which he was proverbial; we can determine with some certainty his estimate of our common humanity, his views of men, of the conduct of life, of the divine government of the world. For not only are the fragments themselves—amounting in many cases to complete paragraphs, stamped as well with unique and peculiar features as with a singular consistency of tone and sentiment, but they illustrate with exactness the truth of the criticism passed on Menander by those who had his works in their entirety before them. We have, moreover, the titles of ninety of his plays, and, as many of these titles are undoubtedly descriptive, they testify to the wonderful versatility and comprehensiveness of his genius. One or two of his plots have been preserved, one or two others can be plausibly conjectured, and we are therefore enabled to understand something of the conduct of his fable, and of his constructive method. A short notice of him by Suidas, a few personal anecdotes collected from Alciphron and others, with the criticisms of Quintilian and Plutarch, furnish us with some interesting particulars. But there is another source of information which critic and biographer alike must consult with far more unalloyed satisfaction—where the critic will recognise the best of commentaries, where the biographer will recognise the true key to character. Among the statues in the Vatican there is one which

cannot fail to rivet the attention of the most listless visitor. It is the figure of a man in the prime of life, sitting on an arm-chair with a roll in his hand. Clad in simple drapery, the firm, hale, well-knit limbs reveal themselves in all the perfection of symmetry and contour. He is in the glory of mature and majestic manhood—health and vigour glow in every line. Careless ease, grace, self-possession—an air of superiority, conscious but not insolent—characterise his attitude. The face is the face of one on whom life had sate lightly, not because its depths had been unfathomed or its solemn mystery unrealised, but because the necessary compromises had been made, and humour had brought insight, and insight tolerance and enjoyment. There is no passion, no enthusiasm, on that tranquil face. The head is bowed, not by time or sickness, but by the habit of reflection which has lined with wrinkles the broad and ample brow, and touched with earnestness, and perhaps with something of melancholy, the placid, meditative features. The eyes, in a half reverie, seem keen and searching, but their depth and fixedness suggest not so much the amused spectator as the philosophic observer. On the sensual lips, half curling into a smile, flickers a light, playful irony; on the delicately curved nostrils are stamped unmistakably pride, refinement, sensibility. Such was Menander as he appeared among men.

He was born in B.C. 341, a year memorable also for the birth of the philosopher Epicurus. His father, Diopieithes, was a distinguished general, and young

Menander first saw the light at a time which must have caused much anxiety to his parents. His father, who was in command of the Athenian forces in the Thracian Chersonese, had ravaged a district which was under Macedonian rule, and Philip had sent a letter of remonstrance to Athens. The matter was taken up by Philip's partisans, and Diopeithes was arraigned, not only for his aggression on the king's territory, but for the means to which he had resorted for supporting his troops. He was defended by Demosthenes in a speech which is still extant, and absolved from blame. Of Menander's mother, Hegesistrate, we know nothing but her musical name. About his early years antiquity is silent. Making all allowances, however, even for preternatural precocity, we may safely refuse credence to Ulpian's statement about his being one of the dicasts on the trial of Ctesiphon in B.C. 330: a dicast of the age of twelve would have been a prodigy which would, we suspect, have required and found very speedy expiation in an Athenian law-court. The young poet had everything in his favour. His uncle Alexis, the author—so says Suidas—of no less than two hundred and forty-five comedies, was one of the most popular dramatists of the time, and he appears to have assisted his nephew in his studies, to have encouraged him in dramatic composition, and to have taught him to affect that purity and elegance of style which characterised in so marked a degree his own dramas. Nor was Alexis his only instructor. It is possible that he was one of the

many youths who hung round Aristotle in the shady walks of the Lyceum; it is certain that he was the friend and disciple of Aristotle's favourite pupil, the illustrious Theophrastus. In Theophrastus he must have found a congenial companion, a minute and close observer of life, who possessed like himself an exquisite sense of the ridiculous, a fine vein of humour, admirable powers of observation, equally admirable powers of description. His *Characters* have been the delight of all ages. They have been translated into every language in Europe, imitations of them are innumerable, and they have been so popular in England and France that we are indebted to them for a distinct branch of literature. Even in an age like the present, when the social sketch has been carried to so nice a degree of subtlety and finish, they have lost nothing of their old charm. The advantages of such a friendship to one who was to make human nature the principal object of his study must have been incalculable, and there is every reason to believe that admiration on the one side and generous affection on the other drew master and pupil very closely together. Indeed, the ancients have accused the youth of copying with servile fidelity the personal peculiarities of the philosopher. That effeminate foppishness and regard for dress, that close attention to exterior adornment and elegance, perhaps also the languid and mincing gait which Menander affected,¹

¹ Unguento delibutus, vestitu adfluens

Veniebat gressu delicato et languido.

Phædrus, lib. vi. 1.

were reminiscences of his master, who had learned them from Aristotle in the days when Aristotle was not superior to such follies. It is not at all unlikely that he first made, while pursuing his studies under Theophrastus, the acquaintance of the most brilliant of his contemporaries, the statesman, the voluptuary, the orator, the philosopher, the poet—the all-accomplished Demetrius Phalereus, in whose ruin fourteen years later he was so nearly involved. As Epicurus passed the first eighteen years of his life at Samos, his intimacy with Menander in all probability did not commence before B.C. 323, when they may have met in the lecture-rooms of Xenocrates. It must have been interrupted again during the Lamian War, and when the two youths met afterwards at Athens in 306, they had both of them laid the foundations of immortal renown. Menander brought out his first successful play, 'Ὀργή, *The Angry Man* (as we may perhaps translate it), in 321, before he had completed his twenty-second year. It was apparently one of those ethical studies in which we may suspect the influence of Theophrastus. We have now no more dates to guide us in tracing his biography. We know that between 321 and 291, the year of his death, he produced upwards of a hundred comedies.

During that period the Athenians had passed through almost every phase of political vicissitude. They had seen an obscure and barbarous state asserting by rapid steps the supremacy over Hellas; they had seen the descendants of Miltiades and Themis-

toes grovelling at the feet of a Macedonian despot ; they had seen a youth at the head of 12,000 trained soldiers and a mob of mercenaries achieve the conquest of the world ; they had seen a mighty empire founded in a few months, in a few months shivered into fragments, in a few months an ordered realm— anarchy and ruin. They had been the sport of a cruel and capricious destiny. Over the darkened stage of Athenian politics tyrant after tyrant had chased each other in swift and disastrous succession—the ruthless Antipater, the milder but unscrupulous Cassander, the all-accomplished but debauched and effeminate Demetrius Phalereus, the bloody and ferocious Lachares, the warrior voluptuary Demetrius Poliorcetes. The last accents of liberty had died on the lips of Demosthenes ; her sun had set in storm at Chaeronea. It never shone again. The noble but ill-guided efforts of Hyperides and Leosthenes had ended in ignominy and defeat. Wise men like Phocion folded their arms and scoffed. The prey alternately of desperate enthusiasts and equally desperate impostors, bandied about from one traitor to another, the Athenians had come to regard political freedom as a blessing too precarious to be worth the sacrifices it involved, as a prize too costly to be the object of a prudent ambition. With the heel of a despot on their necks, they had learned to become infamous and contented. The past was forgotten—it scarcely fired a poet ; the future was ignored. Apathy, dignified under specious titles, became a cult. The polytheism which the great poets of the

two preceding centuries had sublimed into one of the noblest religious creeds which has ever taken form among men, lost all its vitality, and mere atheism reigned in its stead. Everything seemed unreal but the incidents of the passing hour; nothing was certain but change; the old patriotism had dissolved in a sort of sickly cosmopolitanism, the old virtues and aspirations in hedonism and pessimism.

In striking contrast, however, to her moral and political degradation was the social and intellectual splendour of Athens. Never was her population more numerous and thriving. The barriers which had in the days of her pride separated her from the rest of the world were gradually crumbling away. Caste was being abolished. The merchant prince had supplanted the aristocrat, though in succeeding to his place he had succeeded also to his liberality, his refinement, and his judicious patronage of art. The streets of Athens resembled the streets of imperial Rome. During the presidency of Demetrius Phalereus there were in Attica no less than 21,000 free men, 10,000 resident aliens, and 400,000 slaves; and this estimate neither includes their families nor takes account of the myriads who must have been incessantly streaming in and out of the city. While the blasts of war were raging over Asia, and thundering at her very gates, Athens seems to have resembled the Elysium of Epicurus. Commerce flourished, material prosperity was in its zenith—everywhere wealth, pomp, and luxury. Women, the fame of whose beauty had pene-

trated to the remotest palaces of Ecbatana and the Oxus, thronged the studios, the porches, and the halls, refusing the splendid offers of oriental potentates, to lavish their love on the poets and philosophers who have made them immortal—Glycera, the muse of Menander; Gnathæna, the muse of Diphilus; Leontium, the disciple and mistress of Epicurus, whose learned treatise against Theophrastus was the delight of Cicero; Marmorium with her beautiful hair and rosy lips; Leæna, with her soft eyes and her stinging tongue; Lamia, Nannium, and a hundred others. Philosophy was cultivated with assiduity and success. The schools were crowded with eager students—Theophrastus alone could boast of 2000 pupils—and the wit and wisdom of the world met in a city which Liberty had deserted. In the beautiful groves which adjoined the Temple of Apollo Lyceus Aristotle discussed almost every branch of human learning, and when in B.C. 322 he passed away, it was only to make room for Theophrastus and Menedemus. There too were gathered together Zeno, Epicurus, and those other illustrious sages whose names have been preserved by Diogenes Laertius, and whose wisdom, filtered through sect and system, has leavened the philosophies of the world. The abstract sciences may flourish in any soil, but never yet has the character of art remained unmodified by the moral and political condition of the epoch contemporary with its appearance; and the poetical literature of this period exactly reflects it. The rapture and enthusiasm of the epos and the lyre were

no more. Oratory had degenerated into ambitious declamation. The solemn majesty of the tragic drama had long died in the bombast of Theodectes, and the Old Comedy, with its hatred of tyranny, its republican spirit, its personalities, its extravagance, its broad fun, and its lyric ecstasy, was suppressed and forgotten. Æschylus and Sophocles would indeed have been hissed off the stage, Aristophanes would have starved. Poets of a different type were required and found—those poets were Alexis, Philemon, and Menander; a drama of another kind was demanded and created—it was the New Comedy.

It has been sometimes asserted that the New Comedy was simply the Old Comedy in another form,—stripped, that is to say, of its personalities and its lyric element, and that it arose mediately through the Middle Comedy from the measure passed in B.C. 404, prohibiting the introduction of living persons on the stage by name. Such a definition, though it appears to have satisfied Schlegel, is far too narrow, and is, moreover, misleading. The truth is that the New Comedy had little or nothing in common with the Old Comedy of the Athenian stage. It sprang, indeed, historically speaking, from the Middle Comedy, but the characteristics of the Middle Comedy are to be traced for the most part not to Attic but to Sicilian sources, not to the Comedy of Eupolis and Cratinus, but to the Comedy of Epicharmus. To say, as it generally is said, that the transition from the Old to the Middle Comedy is marked by the *Plutus* is to say what is no doubt true, but what is only true with

important reservation. In the Middle Comedy was plainly comprised a drama which had two distinct species—dramas, that is to say, adhering generally to the characteristics, more or less modified, of the Old Comedy, and dramas in which the characteristics peculiar to the New largely preponderated. And this accounts for Aristotle recognising only the distinction between the Old and the New Comedy, and making no mention of the Middle. The *Plutus* illustrates the first species of drama; it bears no resemblance to the second. But the moment we turn to the accounts which have come down to us of the drama of Epicharmus and his school, we feel that we can at once trace the New Comedy, as a branch of Comedy, to its true source. Here was a drama which aimed, not at political satire, not at caricature, not at fantastic illusion, but at a faithful presentation of real life, at portraying manners, at delineating character, and such characters as became stock *dramatis personæ* in the New Comedy, at philosophic reflections on life, at coining proverbs and gnomes. But the New Comedy had other peculiarities; it was an expression of life on other sides than appertains to mere Comedy. If it moved to smiles it moved to tears; if it abounded in humour it abounded in pathos. Its tone in reflection and sentiment was often serious and even melancholy, and occasionally it depicted incidents and situations which bordered closely on tragedy. A remarkable passage in the anonymous *Life of Aristophanes* attributes to him the honour of having formulated this species of drama. He was

the first, says the biographer, to exhibit a play, after the fashion of the New Comedy, in his *Cocalus*, and it was on the model of the *Cocalus* that Menander and Philemon wrote their plays. It introduced, he goes on to say, "a seduction, a recognition, and all such other incidents as Menander affected."¹ As the *Cocalus* is not extant it is impossible to know how far this description is true. It is probably exaggerated. In all likelihood its resemblance to the Comedies of Crates² was much nearer than its resemblance to those of Menander; in other words, the similarity lay, not in style, tone, and colour, but simply in the nature of the plot.

It is not to the Comic but to the Tragic stage that we are to trace the influence most potent with the masters of the New Comedy. Its true forerunner and initiator was Euripides. The style and versification of Menander are unmistakably modelled on those of Euripides. His most characteristic reflections and sentiments are also Euripidean. He owned, indeed, as Quintilian tells us, that he both admired and imitated Euripides.³ So close, indeed, is the general resemblance between the comic and the tragic poet that in the old anthologies nothing is more common than to find passages belonging to the one attributed

¹ Πρῶτος δὲ καὶ τῆς νέας κωμῳδίας τὸν τρόπον ἐπέδειξεν ἐν τῷ Κωκάλῳ, ἐξ οὗ τὴν ἀρχὴν λαβόμενοι Μένανδρός τε καὶ Φιλήμων ἐδραματούργησαν . . . ἔγραψε Κώκαλον, ἐν ᾧ εἰσάγει φθορὰν καὶ ἀναγνωρισμὸν καὶ τᾶλλα πάντα ἃ ἐξήλωσε Μένανδρος. — *Vita Aristophanis, Scholia Græca in Aristophanem* (edit. Didot, p. xxvii.).

² See Aristotle, *Poetics*, cap. v.

³ *Instit. Orat.* See too Meineke's *Epimetrum* to his *Trag. Com. Græc.*, vol. iv. p. 705.

to the other. And what is true of Menander is true of Philemon. "If," he says, or represents one of his characters as saying, "if the dead be really sentient, as some assert, I would hang myself to see Euripides"—

Εἰ ταῖς ἀληθείαισιν οἱ τεθνηκότες
αἰσθησιν εἶχον, ἄνδρες ὥς φασὶν τινες,
ἀπηγξάμην ἂν ὥστ' ἰδεῖν Εὐριπίδην.¹

Traced historically, then, the New Comedy may be regarded in some of its aspects as a development of the Comedy of Epicharmus, in others as a modification and development of Euripidean Tragedy.

The New Comedy, speaking generally, bears the same relation to the other productions of the Greek stage as the romantic drama of modern Europe bears to the classical drama. It was a natural step in the development of art. It arose from no curtailment of the old licence, though that curtailment may have done something to prepare the way for it. There is, and always will be, a tendency in art to become realistic. There is a point in its career when it travels far away from simple nature, creating a world and an atmosphere of its own; but there is also a point when it never fails to return, when it throws off artificial trammels, and betakes itself once more to reality. This is precisely what the New Comedy did. It returned to nature and life. Carrying still further the innovation of Euripides, it abolished the hard and fast lines which had separated comedy from tragedy; and, while it brought down tragedy from an austere

¹ *Frag.* xl. a.

and lofty elevation, it purified comedy from the extravagance which had transformed it into caricature and fantastic illusion. By uniting both, as actual life unites them, it was enabled to hold the mirror up to nature. Its object was to represent the world as it is—its joys, its sorrows, its smiles, its tears; to idealise nothing, to exaggerate nothing, to depict no demigods, to make the ordinary incidents of everyday life its staple material, to trust for its plots and surprises to the extraordinary incidents which vary in the actual course of things the common tenor of events. We very much question whether Philemon and Menander ever put a character on the stage of which they could not point to the original, or ever wove a plot the incidents of which may not have been within the experience of some among their audience. They drew indiscriminately from all classes—from the motley groups which swarmed round the philosophers, idled in the Agora, or pigged together in the Piræus, from the wild pirates of the Ægean and the freebooters of Acarnania, from the brilliant society which thronged the porticoes of Demetrius, or hung about Leæna and Glycera. Merchants, sailors, soldiers, serving-men, farmers, philosophers, quacks, fortune-tellers, artists, poets, courtesans, panders, parasites, and all the anomalous offspring of a rich and highly civilised society, figure among their *dramatis personæ*. Every class seems to have been represented. Sometimes incidents in domestic life furnished them with a plot—the complications arising from the frailties of husbands or wives before marriage, the troubles

connected with supposititious children. Sometimes those social romances common enough among a people where the relations between the sexes were so peculiar, and the population for the most part vagrant and migratory, were their theme; at other times they would draw on the revelations which came out in the law-courts, or on the strange experiences of shipwrecked sailors; occasionally their play would be the study of some vice or humour. But, with all this variety of character and incident, the pivot on which the plot turned was almost invariably a love-story. Ovid tells us that there was no play of Menander's in which love was not an element.¹ As their primary object was to amuse, they were probably careful to select such incidents as savoured more of comedy than of tragedy, though it is easy to see that the tone of the New Comedy, in Menander's hands at least, was essentially serious, bordering very closely, and sometimes trespassing, on the domain of tragedy. Of the broad fun, of the caricature and extravagance of the Old Comedy, there is not, so far as we know, a single trace. The nearest approach we have in modern times to the breadth and comprehensiveness of the New Comedy are the tragicomedies of the Elizabethan age; to its wit and humour, the masterpieces of Molière and Congreve; to its inimitable finish and grace of style, the verse of Pope and the prose of Addison; to its tone and spirit, the novels of Thackeray.

The honour of founding the New Comedy belongs

¹ *Fabula jucundi nulla est sine amore Menandri.*—*Trist.* ii. 369.

to Philemon, who was born at Soli about B.C. 360, and was therefore some twenty years older than Menander. When Menander exhibited his first play in B.C. 320, Philemon was the most popular dramatist in Athens, and from that moment a rivalry, which only ended when the waves of the Piræus closed over the head of the younger poet, began between them. Philemon, though far inferior—so say the ancient critics—to his rival, managed, partly by bribery, partly by pandering to party spirit, and by currying favour with the judges, to maintain the supremacy.¹ “Do you not blush, Philemon, when you gain a victory over me?” was the only remark which Menander condescended to make on one of the many occasions on which Philemon had beaten him.² He was not a man who appears to have been much respected, even by his patrons. Plutarch tells an amusing story about him. In one of his comedies he had taken occasion to libel Magas, the tyrant of Cyrene, on account of his want of learning. Some time afterwards, on the occasion of a visit to Alexandria, he was driven by contrary winds into the harbour of Cyrene, and thus came into his enemy’s hands. Magas, however, disdaining to revenge himself, merely directed a soldier to touch the poet’s throat with a naked sword, to retire without hurting him, and to present him with a set of child’s play-things.³ Philemon was, however, apart from corrupt intrigues, a formidable rival, and Quintilian, a very

¹ Aulus Gellius, xvii. 4.

² *Id.* xvii. 4.

³ *De Cohibenda Ira*, ix.

competent judge, though he condemns the bad taste of those who prefer Philemon to Menander, admits that Philemon is universally and justly admitted to rank next to him.¹ Indeed, to a modern apprehension, there is no very strongly marked distinction between the style of the two poets, though we think we can discern a somewhat coarser fibre in the work of Philemon; and it is certainly possible to understand what Demetrius meant when he described the style of the one as easy and conversational, *λελυμένη καὶ ὑποκριτική*, and that of the other as incatenated and close-clamped, *συνηρητημένη καὶ οἷον ἡσφαλισμένη τοῖς συνδέσμοις*.²

Menander, who learned his philosophy partly from Epicurus and partly from Zeno, was in every respect a true child of the time, and appears to have regarded with easy indifference not only the political troubles which had befallen his country, but the reverses which occasionally befell himself. *Τὴν τῶν πρωτόντων μάθε φέρειν ἐξουσίαν*—"Learn to submit thee to the powers that be"—is a maxim he has repeated more than once. Too wise to embarrass himself with deceptive friendships, he probably knew men too well to respect them, and, expecting nothing, he was not likely to be embittered by disappointment. Not beginning as an optimist, and being naturally amiable, he was in no danger of ending as a cynic. Like Horace, whom he closely resembles, as well in genius as in temperament and tastes, he took care to enjoy the society of those who could

¹ *Instit. Orat.* x. 1.

² *De Elocut.* 197.

amuse or instruct him, and to secure the favour of those who could contribute to his interests. With Demetrius Phalereus he was on terms of the closest intimacy. A ruler who combined the character of a statesman, an orator, a philosopher, a voluptuary, and a poet, was scarcely likely to have been indifferent to the charms of a man like Menander, and while Demetrius was in power Menander held a distinguished place at his court. When, however, in B.C. 307, Demetrius Poliorcetes invaded Athens and expelled his namesake from the city, the poet narrowly escaped being put to death. The Sycophants had lodged their accusations against him, but Telesphorus, the son-in-law of the conqueror, interceded in Menander's favour, and his life was spared.

It was about this time, probably, that he received an invitation from Ptolemy Lagus, the king of Egypt, an ardent admirer of his writings, to emigrate to Alexandria. This, however, he declined. The beautiful Glycera had become his mistress, and with her name his own will be as indissolubly associated as that of Alfieri with the Countess of Albany, or that of our own Byron with La Guiccioli. No poet is so full of sarcasms against women as Menander, and yet assuredly no poet had less reason to complain. If Alciphron can be trusted—and it is highly probable that he drew largely on actual tradition—Glycera was in every way worthy of her illustrious lover. To fidelity and affection, to every female charm and accomplishment, she added the

more substantial attraction of intellectual sympathy. She assisted him, it seems, in the composition of his comedies, she soothed and encouraged him when the partial judges gave the prize to his rival, and in the domestic virtues a courtesan rivalled Arete herself. Alciphron's *Letters* are, of course, purely imaginary, but the letter of Glycera to Bacchis is so charmingly natural that it almost cheats us into a belief in its authenticity.¹ "My Menander," she writes, "has determined to go to Corinth to see the Isthmian games. It was much against my wish, for you know what a trial it is to be deprived of such a lover even for a short time." Still, as he did not often leave her, she had to let him go; but she is full of apprehension; she is afraid he will be intriguing with her friend, for she knows that he has already been attracted by her. "It is not you, my dear, I fear, for I know your honourable feelings, so much as Menander himself—he is such a terrible flirt. I am as certain as I can be of anything that it was quite as much because he thought that he should meet you as on account of the Isthmian games that he undertook this journey, and the austerest of men could not resist you. Perhaps you will blame me for my suspicions. Pardon the jealous fondness of love. If he returns as much in love with me as when he set out, I shall be very grateful to you." She adds also another curious reason for wishing to retain his affections—if they quarrel she will be exposed to ribaldry on the stage (an ambiguous text makes it

¹ Alciphron, *Epistolæ*, i. 29.

doubtful whether she means by the pen of Menander or by some other poet; let us give him the benefit of the doubt). The play (the *Glycera*) in which he sketched her character and commemorated their loves was certainly complimentary: three lines only have been preserved. They are significant:—

Why weep'st thou? By Olympian Zeus I swear
And by Athene, though I know, dear girl,
That I full oft have sworn by them before.

The letter which Alciphron represents him as sending to Glycera on the occasion of Ptolemy's offer is a very pleasing testimony of his affection and gratitude to his beautiful mistress, as well as of that strong patriotic feeling which still—a reminiscence of brighter days—bound the Athenians to the city of the violet crown. It may be read in the second book of Alciphron's *Letters*, where it forms the third.

We learn from Alciphron that Menander had an estate at Piræus; from an old commentator on Ovid that he was drowned while bathing in the harbour; and from Pausanias that he was buried by the road leading out of Piræus towards Athens. He passed away, like our own Shakspeare, in the meridian glory of his genius. He had not completed his fifty-second year. Old age, from which he recoiled in horror; physical pain, from which, like most of his countrymen, he shrank in pusillanimous timidity—were spared him. His life had glided away in almost unbroken tranquillity, and when the end came, it came—as the greatest and wisest of the ancients

wished it to come—suddenly. From his cradle he had been Fortune's darling, and it would indeed seem that, remembering his own lines, she had added to her other boons the last it was in her power to give, the last it was in his power to crave. In his comedy of *The Changeling* he had written:—

Τοῦτον εὐτυχέστατον λέγω
 "Ὅστις θεωρήσας ἀλύπως, Παρμένωι,
 Τὰ σεμνὰ ταῦτ' ἀπῆλθεν, ὅθεν ἦλθεν, ταχύ,
 Τὸν ἥλιον τὸν κοινόν, ἀστέρ',¹ ὕδωρ, νέφη,
 Πῦρ· ταῦτα ἔτη κἂν ἑκατὸν βιώσεται
 "Ὅψει παρόντα.

Of all men, Parmeno, happiest is he
 Who, having stayed just long enough on earth
 To gaze in peace upon its majesty—
 The common sun, star, water, cloud, and fire—
 Betakes him to the nothing whence he came
 As soon as may be. Live a century—
 'Tis the same scene before thee.

It is not possible to ascertain with certainty the plots, or the nature of the plots, of more than a comparatively small number of Menander's plays. Some have been preserved or indicated by the Latin adaptations. Thus, *The Andrian Woman* and *The Perinthian Woman* are in their general features known to us by the *Andria*; those of *The Eunuch* and *The Flatterer* by the *Eunuchus*; those of *The Brothers* by the *Adelphi*; those of *The Self-tormentor* by the *Heauton-timorumenos*. The plots of *The Apparition* and of *The Treasure* have been described to us by Donatus, and that of *The Leucadian Rock* by Servius in his commentary on

¹ *alθέρ'* might be plausibly conjectured here for the common reading, τὸν κοινόν going with it. Cf. τὸν δέφα τὸν κοινόν, *Incert. Fab.* ii.

Virgil's *Æneid* (iii. 279). A few hints from various ancient authors throw some little light on four or five others; in the case of the rest all is conjecture, aided only by titles and scanty fragments. But one thing is quite clear, that Menander's versatile and many-sided genius is very imperfectly represented by Terence, who in all probability confined himself to a particular department of Menandrian drama. Menander's comedies probably fell into four classes. First would come those which may be described as comedies of romantic incident. Such would be *The Apparition*, *The Treasure*, *The Andrian Woman*, *The Perinthian Woman*, *The Leucadian Rock*, and *The Suitors*. Next would come studies from domestic life, illustrated by *The Woman-hater*, in which a man having repented of his marriage is so provoked by everything his wife does or says that all the exhortations of his friends cannot recall his maddened mind to reason, and by *The Necklace*, which must have been a very amusing play. An old man, whose comforts are studied quite innocently by a female servant, who happens, however, to be well educated and handsome, is compelled to turn her out of his house because she has attracted the jealousy of his old and ugly wife, who insists that the poor woman is his concubine. To this class probably also belonged *The Woman Clipped*, *The Woman Cuffed*, and *The Changeling*. To the third class may be assigned those which depicted the social and fashionable life of Athens, and they seem in truth to have depicted every phase of it, suggesting the comprehensive ful-

ness with which Balzac treated of modern Paris. In *The Feasts* and *The Festival of Aphrodite* we had probably pictures of those sides of Athenian life with which Menander's comedies were by the ancients especially associated. "You don't seem to me to be an Attic woman," says a lover in Philostratus, "for you would not be ignorant of night festivals and feasts and of Menander's plays."¹ The *Phanion*, the *Thais*, and the *Glycera* were studies of the courtesans, and the last play was, as we learn from Alciphron, a picture of his own mistress and her ways. In the *Sham Hercules*, the *Thrasuleon*, *The Hated Man*, and probably in *The Shield*, we had studies of soldiers and military braggarts. In *The Thessalian Woman* we learn from Pliny² that we were among witches and their incantations; so also (our informant is Alciphron³) in *The Fanatic*. *The Priestess* was a study of religious hysterics, and described how an educated and accomplished woman, losing her head, enrolled herself among the priestesses of Cybele, and went about the streets drumming on a brazen cymbal, and boasting that she could obtain from the goddess whatever she prayed for. *The Fishermen* seems to have been a study in marine life; perhaps also *The Steersmen*; *The Shipmaster* was most likely a domestic comedy.

But it is to the plays which are comprised in the fourth class that a modern reader would have turned, had they been extant, with most interest. They appear to have been pure studies in character,

¹ *Epist.* 42.

² *Nat. Hist.* xxx. 2.

³ *Epist.* ii. 4 *ad fin.*

or rather of particular phases of character; to have been elaborate delineations of what Ben Jonson calls "humours."¹ To this class belonged, or appear to have belonged, for it is impossible to speak with certainty, *Anger*, *The Ill-tempered Man*, *The Superstitious Man*, *The Flatterer*, *The Woman-hater*, and *The Timid Man*. These plays, which may be pronounced to be the lineal ancestors of *Tartuffe* and *L'Avare*, as well as of the classical comedies of Jonson, may in germ be traced no doubt originally to Aristotle, and immediately to Theophrastus.

The plots of Menander were, we are told, distinguished by their extreme simplicity. Of three of them descriptions have come down to us. That of *The Apparition* is of singular interest and beauty. The stepmother of a young son had had, previous to her marriage, an intrigue with a neighbour, the issue of which was a daughter. To this daughter, a girl of surpassing loveliness, the mother was devotedly attached; and, though happiness with her husband would have been no longer possible had he discovered her secret, she could not bear to be separated from her child. She had recourse, therefore, to an ingenious device. She lodged the child with her next-door neighbour, removed the wall which separated her own apartment from that of her daughter, and was thus

¹ And which he thus admirably describes:—

When some one peculiar quality
Doth so possess a man that it doth draw
All his affects, his spirits, and his powers
From their confusions all to run one way,
This may be truly said to be a humour.

Introduction to *Every Man out of his Humour*.

enabled to enjoy her society for some hours every day. To obviate all suspicion and all possibility of intrusion, she pretended that the aperture made in the wall was a shrine; she called it sacred, she covered it with leaves and chaplets, and she said that she went there to sacrifice, and commune with her Genius. One day, however, she was absent, and her stepson, curious to see whether he could catch a glimpse of the divinity so piously worshipped by his stepmother, entered the aperture. The girl, hearing some one and thinking it was her mother, came forward, and the awe-struck youth was in the presence of the divinity he sought. He soon found that the goddess was but mortal, that the apparition thrilled with passion responsive to his own. For some time his stolen visits alternated with those of his stepmother, but at last the secret was divulged. The mother confessed her story to her husband, he forgave her everything, and the young pair sealed by a happy marriage their own love and their parents' reconciliation. Part of the plot of *The Leucadian Rock* is preserved by Servius; it is a curious romance, though at what point Menander took it up is doubtful. A youth named Phaon used to ply a ferry-boat between Lesbos and the continent. One day a poor infirm old woman requested to be carried across, and the good-natured youth, pitying her forlorn condition, conveyed her over for nothing. The old woman was Aphrodite in disguise. Pleased with his kindness, she gave him an alabaster box of ointment, telling him that whenever he anointed himself with it a woman could not fail

to become passionately in love with him. Phaon had a happy time. For one of his victims, however—according to some authorities this victim was no other than the poetess Sappho—he did not care, and she in consequence flung herself from the Leucadian promontory into the sea.¹

But to turn to the Fragments. As it is now impossible to judge at first hand of Menander's skill and power as a dramatic artist, not a single complete scene from his plays having been preserved, the interest of his extant remains lies chiefly in the light they throw, or seem to throw, on his sentiments and opinions, on his ethics and religious views. Here, however, we must proceed with caution. The individuality of a dramatist is not always to be deduced from his characters; still less must we assume that what he places in the mouths of his characters is the record of his own impressions and convictions. But the father is generally recognised in the children—a race is individualised by its idiosyncrasies. The tests of the personal element in a dramatic poet are the predominance of a certain tone and colour, the multiplication of copies presenting the same typical resemblance, the obvious tendency to observe and judge from particular points of view, and the continual recurrence of the same or similar ideas, sentiments, opinions, and generalisations. Even in the most impersonal of all poets—our own Shakspeare—much of the man himself is clearly discernible. No one could doubt that

¹ Our own Lyly has founded a play on the same story. See his *Sappho and Phaon*.

in politics he was an ultra-conservative; that his religious opinions were speculatively tolerant and liberal, but practically and professedly conventional; that, as a citizen, he had great respect for the world and the world's law, had little sympathy with fanatics and enthusiasts, and was no believer in Utopias. All this and more than this we deduce with certainty, not from particular passages, but from the tenor of what finds expression repeatedly and emphatically in his writings. Applying the same test to Menander we shall, therefore, take care that what is quoted in illustration of his characteristics shall not be selected arbitrarily from mere dramatic utterances, but shall be typical.

Perhaps the first thing which strikes us in these fragments is the sombre and gloomy view which their author appears to have taken of life and man, partly because it is thrown into relief by the ordinary associations of comedy, and partly because it stands in striking contrast with the serenity and cheerfulness of his philosophy. The tragic poets themselves have not put the case more strongly for the melancholy paradox of Theognis and Bacchylides.¹ Our own Swift has not exceeded him in pity and contempt for man. Take the following:—

¹ Theognis, 425 *seq.* Bacchylides, *Frag.* xxxvii. 2. But it has found its most popular expression in Sophocles, *Œd. Col.* 1225 *seq.* :—

μὴ φῦναι τὸν ἅπαντα γικᾶ λόγον· τὸ δ', ἐπεὶ φανῇ,
βῆναι κείθεν ὅθεν περ ἦκει πολὺ δευτέρων ὡς τάχιστα.

“Not to have been born is best of all; but, when one has seen the light, to go as soon as possible to whence one came is next best by far.”

Suppose some god should come to me and say :
 When you are dead you yet shall live again,
 Be what you will—or dog or sheep or goat,
 Or man or horse, for live again you must ;
 It is your fate, so choose what you will be—
 Anything rather, anything but man,
 Would be my prompt request.¹

So again—

Man is but pretext for calamity.²

To some one who is in trouble he represents one of his characters saying that, as sorrow is man's natural portion, and as the gods make human existence conditional on suffering, we cannot charge them either with injustice or deception when they afflict us.³ It is the common lot of all—

I used to think the rich, O Phantias,
 Who had no need to borrow, passed their nights
 Without a groan, and roam'd not up and down,
 Crying *alas!* but sweetly, softly slept ;
 But now I see that you the world calls blessed
 Fare just as we do—grief and life are kin.
 With luxury grief lives, at glory's side
 It stands, and is the poor man's comrade to the end.⁴

But man gets no more than he deserves, for he is the most graceless and ungrateful thing that crawls. "All gratitude has long been dead in man" (*Sent. Sing.* 498) ; "Save man from ruin, he's your foe for ever" (*Id.* 34) ; and his own folly and stupidity add to his miseries—

No creature in the world but is more blessed,
 And hath not more intelligence than man.

¹ *The Changeling*. I wish that here and elsewhere my translations could have done more justice to the original. I can only say with the old grammarian, *Feci quod potui, faciant meliora potentes*.

² *Incert. Fab.* cclxiii.

³ *Id.* ii.

⁴ *The Lute-player*.

Take the first object in our sight—this ass—
 A sorry thing he is, as all allow ;
 And yet his evils spring not from himself,
 And all that Nature gave him he endures.
 But we beside our necessary ills
 Make ourselves others of our own providing.
 A sneeze—we're grieved ; a harsh word—and we rage ;
 A dream brings fear, a clamorous owl alarm ;
 Anguish, opinions, laws, ambitions,
 All these are evils added by ourselves.¹

The only just thing is, as he beautifully remarks, the earth ; sow it with grain, it gives you grain again.² The world itself he describes in lines which Thackeray might have prefixed to *Vanity Fair*, as a meeting-place where men tarry for a while amid a motley throng of idlers, thieves, and gamblers ; happy is he who gets him gone from it as soon as he can. If he lingers on to old age, his lot is merely to be worn out with weariness and disgust, and to add to the enemies who are always plotting his ruin.³ If, he says in another place, a man be honest, noble, and generous, of what avail is it to him in such times ? The first prize in life goes to the flatterer, the second to the backbiter, and mere malice gets the third—

¹ " Ἀπαντα τὰ ζῶ' ἐστὶ μακαριώτατα
 καὶ νοῦν ἔχοντα μᾶλλον ἀνθρώπου πολὺ.
 τὸν ὄνον ὁρᾶν ἔξεστι πρῶτα τουτονί,
 οὗτος κακοδαίμων ἐστὶν ὁμολογουμένως.
 τούτῳ κακὸν δι' αὐτὸν οὐδὲν γίγνεται,
 ἀ δ' ἡ φύσις δέδωκεν αὐτῷ ταῦτ' ἔχει.
 ἡμεῖς δὲ χωρὶς τῶν ἀναγκαίων κακῶν
 αὐτοὶ παρ' αὐτῶν ἕτερα προσπορίζομεν.
 λυπούμεθ', ἀν πτάρῃ τις, ἀν εἴπῃ κακῶς,
 ὀργιζόμεθ', ἀν ἴδῃ τις ἐνύπνιον, σφόδρα
 φοβούμεθ', ἀν γλαυῆ ἀνακράγῃ, δεδοίκαμεν.
 ἀγωνίαί, δόξαι, φιλοτιμίαί, νόμοι,
 ἅπαντα ταῦτ' ἐπίθετα τῇ φύσει κακά.—*Incert. Fab.* v.

² *The Husbandman.*

³ *The Changeling.*

ἄνθρωπος ἂν ἢ χρηστός, εὐγενὴς σφόδρα,
γενναῖος, οὐδὲν ὄφελος ἐν τῷ νῦν γένει,
πράττει δὲ κόλαξ ἄριστα πάντων, δεύτερα
ὁ συκοφάντης, ὁ κακοήθης τρίτα λέγει.¹

An early death is the greatest boon that Nature can bestow, and *euthanasia* is not likely to be the lot of advanced years—οὐκ εὐθανάτως ἀπῆλθεν ἐλθὼν εἰς χρόνον. Chance (Τύχη), he repeats over and over again, rules the world, human foresight is mere folly. Chance gave and chance will take away. A blind and wretched power—τυφλὸν γε καὶ δύστηνόν ἐστιν ἡ Τύχη²—she rules men's thoughts and words and deeds. In a fragment of *The Cnidian Woman* and of *The Head-dress* he uses Ταυτόματον—mere Chance—as a synonym for the same power,³ showing us how far we have travelled from Pindar, in whose pantheon Τύχη is the daughter of Zeus. What a world of pathos is there in this couplet from *The Olynthian Woman*:—

How hard it is, when happy Nature gives
A noble boon, that fortune should destroy it !

Prayers and ceremonies are of no avail, for if a man could drag a god to perform his wishes, he would be more powerful than the deity himself.⁴

Much of this was no doubt a concession to the conventional sentiments which a dramatic poet is bound more or less to reflect, and is to be attributed not

¹ *The Fanatic*.

² *The Bridals*.

³ Philemon, *Incert. Fab.* xlviii., gives the commentary—

οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν οὐδεμία τύχη θεός,
οὐκ ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ ταυτόματον, ὃ γίνεται
ὥς ἔτυχ' ἐκάστῳ προσαγορεύεται Τύχη.

⁴ *The Priestess*.

only to the peculiar character of the age in which Menander lived, and the society in which he moved, but in some measure perhaps to the influence of Euripides, who was by far the most popular poet in Greece. Since his death in B.C. 406, his maxims and paradoxes were on the lips of every man and every clever woman in Athens. On philosophy and ethics, so far at least as they interested the multitude, his influence was prodigious. His cynicism, his misogynism, his rationalism, operated on the society which surrounded Menander pretty much as the cant of Hobbism operated on the society which surrounded our own Drydens, Congreves, and Wycherleys; and such views were unhappily too much in unison with the moral and political degradation of the age to be otherwise than acceptable. On the stage he was the dominant power. He had determined the course of the drama, and not only did the Middle and New Comedy spring directly from his theory of art, but he coloured the ethics and theology of the drama in Greece till its extinction. The most offensive illustration of his influence on the Middle and New Comedy is to be found in its misogynism. Since Euripides this had become the fashionable cant. The fragments of Menander are a storehouse of invectives against that sex from which Homer had drawn his Arete, his Penelope, and his Nausicaa; from which Sophocles had drawn his Antigone, his Deianira, and his Electra; from which Euripides had himself drawn his Macaria and his Alcestis; which had given Sappho and Corinna to poetry, Diotima and Leontium

to philosophy. He can see nothing good in them, nothing but what is reprehensible and shameless. They are habitually untruthful—"to tell one truth's beyond a woman's power." They are all alike—"this woman and that woman are the same"—"live with a lion rather than a wife." They bring a house to destruction :—

That house wherein a woman holds the sway
Must go to certain ruin.

Again—

Though many a monster roams the land and sea,
No monster matches woman.

It is as useless to rebuke as it is to advise them.¹ Prometheus deserved his crucifixion on Caucasus for having moulded so great a curse for man. To transcribe indeed his invectives and sarcasms against women and his dissuasions from marriage would be to transcribe a considerable portion of the fragments. Next to the misery of a husband is the misery of a father. Nobody can be more wretched than a father except the father who has more children—

οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν ἀθλιώτερον πατρὸς
πλὴν ἑτερος ἂν ᾧ πλείονων παίδων πατήρ.²

Perhaps cynical misogynism never went further than in the passage where he accounts for a mother loving her children more than the father does because she knows that they are hers, while he only surmises that they are his.³

¹ Μη λαιδόρει γυναῖκα μηδὲ νοθέτει.—*Sent. Sing.*

² *Incert. Fab. ex.*

³ *Id. cxi.* Euripides made characteristically the same remark.

After all this the reader will not unnaturally wonder where we are to find that "cheerfulness" and "nobleness" which Goethe noted as peculiarly characteristic of this poet. The answer is not far to seek. Menander is cheerful because, in his views of life, he looks the facts of life steadily in the face. He is the slave of no delusions. He takes things exactly as he finds them; he draws no bills on hope for experience to dishonour. He may libel women—it was his only concession to the cant of the day; he may sigh with a cynicism too complacent, perhaps, over the vanity of the world and the hollowness of men; but he teaches us at the same time, like Horace and Montaigne, to accept soberly and cheerfully the relative position in which Man and Fortune stand to each other; in receiving happiness, to remember that sorrow also is our portion; that good and evil are inextricably interwoven; that nothing is permanent, that all is relative; that vice may pass into virtue, that virtue, strained too far, may revert by reaction to vice; that pain and calamity and death are the skeletons of life's feast; but that for all that there is no reason why the garlands should not be bright, the guests merry, and the cup pass freely round.

Thou art a man, so never ask from Heaven
Freedom from ills, but resignation;
For if thou wishest to pass all thy days
Unvex'd by sorrow, then thou wishest, friend,
To be a god, or hasten to thy grave.

Thou wilt find much to cross thee everywhere;
But where the good preponderates, thither look.

Fight not with God and bring on other storms,
But those thou hast to struggle with endure.

O, ever chase vexation from thy life,
For life is short.

Time heals the wounds which Fate inflicts, and Time
Will be thy healer too.

Things of themselves do work their way to good,
E'en though thou sleepest, and to evil too.

Good grows not like a tree from one sole root,
But evil grows up side by side with good ;
And out of evil Nature brings us good.¹

In religion Menander is a pure rationalist. The old polytheism and the superstitions of the vulgar he regarded with contempt and abhorrence, believing them to be opposed not only to that serenity and peace of mind which it should be the first object of every man to attain, but to virtuous conduct too. In a well-known epigram he has coupled his friend Epicurus with Themistocles, the one having delivered his country from slavery, the other from folly :—

Χαίρε Νεοκλείδα δίδυμον γένος, ὃν ὁ μὲν ὑμῶν
πατρίδα δουλοσύνας ῥύσαθ', ὁ δ' ἀφροσύνας.

His theology is sometimes precisely that of Epicurus, as where, ridiculing a particular providence, he represents one of his characters as saying, “Do you suppose that the gods have sufficient leisure to be distributing daily to each individual his portion of good and evil?”²

¹ *Incert. Fab.* xix. ; *The Boeotian Woman* ; *The Eunuch* ; *The Necklace* ; *Incert. Fab.* cxxxi. ; *The Nurse*.

² οἷε τοσαύτην τοὺς θεοὺς ἀγειν σχολήν,
ὥς τ' ἀγαθὸν τε καὶ κακὸν καθ' ἡμέραν
νέμειν ἐκάστω ;—*The Suitors*.

"The mind," he says in one place, "is man's god,"¹ —ὁ Νοῦς γὰρ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός. Again, in *The Brothers*, "to good men the mind is always, as it should be, a god." We need no soothsayers, "as the noble word has its shrine everywhere, for the god who shall speak is man's mind."² "The man who has most wit is the best soothsayer." His rationalism sometimes takes a humorous turn, as in the following fragment:³—

Winds, water, earth, and sun, and fire, and stars,
 These, says great Epicharmus, are our gods,
 But I conceive the only useful gods
 Are gold and silver; set these up within
 Your household, and they'll give you all you ask—
 Fields, houses, lacqueys, silver-plate, and friends,
 Judges and witnesses. Bribe—only bribe!
 The gods themselves will be your humble servants.

With the popular superstitions he makes short work, and on one occasion in a very amusing passage. It is apparently addressed to some mendicant who was carrying about an image of Cybele to beg the customary alms.

Οὐδείς μ' ἀρέσκει περιπατῶν ἔξω θεός
 μετὰ γράος, οὐδ' εἰς οἰκίαν παρεισπεσὼν
 ἐπὶ τοῦ σανιδίου· τὸν δίκαιον δεῖ θεδν
 οἱκοι μένειν σώζοντα τοὺς ἰδρυμένους.

No god for me is he who strolls the streets
 With beldames, or comes sneaking to my hearth
 On tablets—no! give me a deity
 Who stays at home and minds his worshippers.⁴

This, it will be seen, anticipates the note of Lucian,

¹ This is, of course, susceptible of two interpretations, but the one given is probably the correct one. Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* i. 26, who attributes a similar remark to Euripides.

² *The Acolyte.*

³ *Incert. Fab.* x.

⁴ *The Charioteer.*

just as in the other passages we have the note of Euripides. And the combination is significant. Menander so often talks the language of Euripides, and we are so frequently reminded in these fragments of the poet whom he acknowledged to be his master, that we might suppose the resemblance between them to be closer than it is. But they differed greatly. Euripides never entirely cast off the shackles of the old beliefs; he remained all his life a perplexed and harassed sceptic, brooding gloomily over insoluble metaphysical problems, and at last returning, as the *Bacchæ* shows, to simple acquiescence, or at least to acknowledging the wisdom of simple acquiescence, in established dogma. Of all this there is no trace in Menander. A pure rationalist, with observation, experience, and reason for his guides, with humour and with life's common pleasures as his solaces, he appears to have confined himself, and to have confined himself contentedly, within the limits of the knowable. He has not left a line to indicate that the spectacle of a world, the anomalies, troubles, and confusions of which no one has painted in more vivid colours than himself, at all disturbed or perplexed him. The existence of a Supreme Deity, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, he neither denies nor affirms. What is certain is that man can know nothing about him, and that it is the height of folly to pry into such questions. "Do not desire to inquire into the nature of God, for," he adds with quiet humour, "you are guilty of impiety in desiring to get knowledge about one who does not wish to be

known [or who does not wish that such inquiries should be made]"—

Τίς ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς οἱ θέλης σὺ μανθάνειν,
ἀσεβείς τδν οὐ θέλοντα μανθάνειν θέλων.¹

With regard to the supernatural, he is satisfied in discerning that, if the power most energetic in life is the incalculable blind agent which is personified as Τύχη, there is also another power making for righteousness which is personified sometimes as Θεός, and sometimes as θεοί—

He, They, One, All ; within, without ;
The Power in darkness whom we guess.

But it is doubtful whether he regarded the latter as anything else than a fiction of the mind, an objective presentation of ethical truths. Man is practically a free agent, made or marred neither by gods nor by fortune, but by himself. The man, he says in one place, who bears not what he has to bear as he should and can, calls his own character Fortune.² Again, when man is prosperous he makes no appeal to Fortune, but when he gets into grief and trouble he at once lays the blame at her door.³ He who works well need never despair of anything, for everything is within the grasp of perseverance and toil. If there be a god, of one thing we may be sure—he is never at the side of the idle (θεὸς δὲ τοῖς ἀργοῖσιν οὐ παράσταται) or the sinner (ἀμαρτάνουσιν) (*Sent. Sing.*), but helping those who do what is right. In one of the Fragments this finds beautiful expression—"whenever you do what is sin-

¹ *Incert. Fab.* (Clerk, ccxlv.). Meineke attributes it to Philemon.

² *Id.* xliii.

³ *Id.* xx.

less have the shield of good hope before you, knowing this, that God himself takes part with righteous courage.”¹ Endurance, resignation, and self-command are the virtues on which he lays most stress :—

Bear with good grace ill luck and injury—
This is the wise man's part ; he is not wise
Who knits his brow, and babbles *Woe is me !*
But he who is the master of his ills.²

If fortune is foolish we should be brave—*πειρῶ τύχης ἀνοιαν ἀνδρείως φέρειν*—try to bear fortune's folly like a man.³ If the gods will not give us what we would accept if they would, we have the satisfaction of feeling that the fault is not in us but in them.⁴ What we should especially guard against is reckless action and passion under the stress of affliction, remembering that there is no surer sign of a pusillanimous spirit than irritability and spleen.⁵ Of the social virtues he dwells most emphatically on round dealing and truthfulness, of social vices on envy and slander. Thus—

The gain that comes from villainy is but
The earnest-money of calamity,⁶—

'Tis ever the best course to speak the truth
At every turn⁷—

Falsehood's detested by the wise and good⁸—

are typical of what he frequently repeats, but he also observes, as Euripides had observed before him, that, where the choice lies between falsehood and mis-

¹ *ὅταν τι πράττης ὅσιον, ἀγαθὴν ἐλπίδα
πρόβαλλ' ἐαυτῷ, τοῦτο γινώσκων ὅτι
τόλμη δίκαια καὶ θεὸς συλλαμβάνει.*—*Incert. Fab.* xlvii.

² *Id.* xxix.

⁴ *The Woman Cuffed.*

⁶ *Id.* cxlviii.

³ *Id.* cclxv.

⁵ *Incert. Fab.* xxv.

⁸ *Sent. Sing.*

⁷ *The Changeling.*

chievous truth, the former is preferable, *κρείττον δ' ἐλέσθαι ψεύδος ἢ ἀληθὲς κακόν* (*Incert. Fab.* cclxx.).

Among the fragments from the unidentified plays is a fine passage about envy, the vice most characteristic of his countrymen¹ :—

Methinks, my boy, thou dost not understand
How each thing by its proper ill decays,
And all that is to mar it dwells within.
Thus iron is corroded by the rust,
Moths fret the garment, and the worm the wood,
But envy, worst of all the ills that be,
Hath wasted, wastes, and will for ever waste,
The ignoble passion of a villainous soul.

The envious man, he says in another fragment, is at war with himself, for he is always afflicted with pains of his own causing.² He is full of wholesome lessons both for the prosperous and for the unfortunate. Too much prosperity is, he remarks, the chief source of man's calamities :—

Ἀρχὴ μεγίστη τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις κακῶν
ἀγαθὰ τὰ λίαν ἀγαθὰ (*Incert. Fab.* clxxxii.).

And on this another fragment affords an excellent commentary : “When a man who is prosperous and has kind friends seeks for something better than he has, he is seeking for evils.”³

¹ Μειράκιον, οὗ μοι κατανοεῖν δοκεῖς ὅτι
ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἑκάστα κακίας σήπεται
καὶ πάντα τὰ λυμαινόμεν' ἔνεστιν ἐνδοθεν,
οἷον ὁ μὲν ἰός, ἂν σκοπῇς, τὸ σιδήριον,
τὸ δ' ἱμάτιον οἱ σῆτες, ὁ δὲ θρὶψ τὸ ξύλον.
ὁ δὲ τὸ κάκιστον τῶν κακῶν πάντων, φθόνος
φθισικὸν πεποίηκε καὶ ποιήσει καὶ ποιεῖ
ψυχῆς πονηρᾶς δυσγενὲς παράστασις (*Incert. Fab.* xii.).

I read with the MSS. *παράστασις*, and substitute conjecturally *δυσγενής*, for the ordinarily accepted *δυσσεβεὶς παραστάσεις*, which is difficult to understand.

² *Incert. Fab.* lxxxix.

³ *Id.* clxxi.

And though poverty is, as he constantly repeats, one of the worst of ills, riches are the “veils of care,” and make no man sleep the sounder. Here to-day and perhaps gone to-morrow, the use to which they have been put when possessed is everything. What we should possess is “the rich soul”—*ψυχὴν ἔχειν δεῖ πλουσίαν*. There is a fine passage in *The Ill-tempered Man*, where a son is lecturing a miserly father :—

Of wealth thou babblest, an unstable thing.
 Couldst thou be sure it would remain with thee
 While thy time lasts, then guard it safe and share
 With no man what thou hast, for it is thine.
 But if thou hold'st of fortune not thyself,
 Why be so grudging, father, of thy wealth?
 For she, perhaps, may ravish it from thee,
 And add it to some worthless favourite's store.
 Therefore, my father, while it still is thine,
 Put it to noble use, aid all, and let
 As many as thou canst be rich through thee;
 This wealth abides, and shouldst thou ever fall,
 What was thine own will be thine own again.

And with what solemn eloquence is human pride humbled in the following passage :—

“Ὅταν εἰδέναι θέλῃς σεαυτὸν ὅστις εἶ
 ἔμβλεψον εἰς τὰ μνήμαθ', ὡς ὁδοιπορεῖς.
 ἐνταῦθ' ἔνεστιν ὅστέα καὶ κούφη κόνις
 ἀνδρῶν βασιλέων καὶ τυράννων καὶ σοφῶν,
 καὶ μέγα φρονούντων ἐπὶ γένει καὶ χρήμασιν,
 αὐτῶν τε δόξη, καὶ πᾶσι κάλλει σωματίων.
 καὶ οὐδὲν αὐτῶν τῶνδ' ἐπήρκεσεν χρόνον.
 κοινὸν τὸν ἔδην ἔσχον οἱ πάντες βροτοί.
 πρὸς ταῦθ' ὁρῶν γίγνωσκε σεαυτὸν ὅστις εἶ.”¹

Here, as elsewhere, translation can pretend to give nothing more than the sense, at least such translation as the present writer is competent to give :—

¹ *Incert. Fab. ix.*

Whenever thou desir'st to know thyself,
 Look at the tombstones on thy pilgrimage ;
 There lie the bones, there the light dust of kings,
 Of tyrant, sage, of those who plum'd themselves
 On lineage and on wealth, and on their fame,
 And on their beauty ; and yet none of these
 Was any match for time. All mortals share
 The grave that waits for all. Then look toward these,
 And know thou what thou art.

One of the most striking characteristics of Men-
 ander is his philanthropy, which sometimes finds
 expression in sentiments which show how nearly he
 approaches the ethics of Christianity :—

Ἰδίας νόμιζε τῶν φίλων τὰς συμφοράς.¹

Think the misfortunes of your friends your own.

Τοῦτ' ἐστὶ τὸ ζῆν οὐχ ἑαυτῷ ζῆν μόνον.²

'Tis not to live to live for self alone.

For slaves and the poor he has, like Euripides, always
 a kind word ; between the serf and the freeman he
 recognises no essential distinction :—

The slave who is a slave and nothing more
 Will be a rascal. Let him share free speech,
 And this will rank him with the best of men.³

No man, he says in another place, will be a slave
 who does a slave's work in the spirit of a freeman.⁴
 In one line he has summed up that grand truth to
 which Burns and Tennyson have given the most
 eloquent modern expression—

Ἀνὴρ ἀριστος οὐκ ἂν εἴη δυσγενής.

No noble man can be ignobly born.⁵

¹ *Sent. Sing.*

² *Incert. Fab.* cclii.

³ *The Boy.*

⁴ *Incert. Fab.* cclxxix.

⁵ *Sent. Sing.*, and cf. the eloquent passage in *The Cnidian Woman*.

The following passage is evidently part of a dialogue between some birth-proud mother and her son :—

Fine birth will be my death. O, talk no more
About man's ancestors, for those who have
By nature nothing noble in themselves
Betake them to the tombs, and reckon up
Their lineage and their grandsires. Every man
Must have a grandsire, for how else could he
Have seen the light at all ? But if he cannot,
Either through change of place or dearth of friends,
Tell who his grandsire was, is he less noble
Than he who can ? No, mother ; he's the nobleman—
Were he some common Æthiopian—
Who is by nature noble.

If his writings abound in dissuasives from marriage, no poet has insisted more emphatically on the reverence due from children to parents. The young are to regard them as their gods—*νόμιζε σταντῶ τοὺς γονεῖς εἶναι θεούς*—and throughout life a father and a mother are to rank next in honour to the deity. A man who reverences his parents may hope to thrive, but disobedience and disloyalty to them are certain to bring misfortune in their train.

Menander, like Shakspeare, no doubt drew largely on that common stock of proverbs which are the inheritance of every people, and it is now impossible to distinguish in every case between what he coined himself and what he appropriated. Many have been attributed to him which belonged to Euripides and to his own predecessors and contemporaries of the Middle and New Comedy, and some are undoubtedly forgeries of much later times. But it is certain that his original contributions were more considerable than those of any single man, and a selection from

those which are undoubtedly authentic, and from those which have reasonable claims to be regarded as authentic, will fitly conclude this sketch.

Νικᾷ παλαιὰς χάριτας ἡ νέα χάρις.

Old favours to the latest favour yield.

Παθητὸς ἔστι πᾶς τις εὐπροσήγορος.

Affliction teaches affability.

Ὅ μὴδὲν εἰδὼς οὐδὲν ἐξαμαρτάνει.

He sins in naught who sins in ignorance.

Ζῶμεν γὰρ οὐχ ὥς θέλομεν ἀλλ' ὥς δυνάμεθα.

We live not as we will, but as we can.

Μηδέποτε πειρῶ στρεβλὸν ὀρθῶσαι κλάδον,
οὐδεὶς ἀνάγκην οὐδὲ φύσιν βιάζεται.

Never attempt to straighten a crookt branch ;
No man constrains necessity or nature.

Κρίνει φίλους ὁ καιρός, ὥς χρυσὸν τὸ πῦρ.

As fire proves gold, the pinch will prove the friend.

Δρυὸς πεσοῦσης πᾶς ἀνὴρ ξυλεύεται.

All gather faggots from the fallen oak.

Ἡθοὺς δὲ βᾶσανός ἐστιν ἀνθρώποις χρόνος.

Man's touchstone for man's character is time.

Ὅμοια πόρνη δάκρυα καὶ ῥήτωρ ἔχει.

The tears of orators are like the harlot's.

Οὐδεὶς ὁ νοεῖς μὲν οὐδέν, ὁ δὲ ποιεῖς βλέπει.

None know thy thoughts, but all can see thy deeds.

Γυνὴ γὰρ οὐδὲν οἶδε πλὴν ὁ βούλεται.

Women know naught but what they choose to know.

Ἡ λέγει τι σιγῆς κρεῖττον, ἢ σιγὴν ἔχει.

Say what will better silence, or be dumb.

‘Ως ἡδὺς ὁ βίος, ἂν τις αὐτὸν μὴ μάθῃ.

How sweet is life—to one who knows it not !

Βίος ἐστὶν ἂν τις τῇ βίῳ χαίρῃ βιῶν.

He only lives who living joys in life.

In the line

Ἀνὴρ ὁ φεύγων καὶ πάλιν μαχήσεται

we have the original of the famous couplet—

He that fights and runs away
Will live to fight another day,

while in

Ὁ συνιστορῶν αὐτῷ τι, καὶ ἡ θρασύτατος,
ἡ σύνεσις αὐτὸν δειλότατον ποιεῖ,

we have exactly Shakspeare's

Conscience doth make cowards of us all ;

and in

Ξένος ὃν ἀκολουθεῖ τοῖς ἐπιχωρίοις νόμοις

we have what finds embodiment in the proverb “ Do at Rome as the Romans do.”

Some are interesting from their association. Goethe prefixed—

Ὁ μὴ δαρὲς ἄνθρωπος οὐ παιδεύεται—

No discipline for man without the knout—

as the motto for his *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, and the melancholy line—

Ἀνθρωπος, ἱκανὴ πρόφασις εἰς τὸ δυστυχεῖν—

was Gray's text for an ode which Menander himself might have inspired—the *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*. The line in the *Thais*—

Φθείρουσιν ἡθῇ χρῆσθ' ὁμιλίας κακαί

Evil communications corrupt good manners—

is not only consecrated by St. Paul's quotation of it, but, as we all know, by associations still more hallowed and solemn. Strange chance, that the words of this poet should mingle with those of that pathetic liturgy which awakens the saddest memories of the Christian! Again, too, he comes home to us, and not through accident. How many a mother bending in agony over the young life laid low has found consolation, little knowing its source, in his beautiful sentiment, so human in its ineffable tenderness, so divine in its triumphant consecration of calamity—

Whom the gods love dies young—

ὃν οἱ θεοὶ φιλοῦσιν ἀποθνήσκει νέος.

Let us still nurse the hope—it has been for more than four centuries a hope constantly disappointed but as constantly renewed—that some happy chance may yet put us in possession of the prize for which Goethe and Schlegel sighed, which many illustrious scholars have wasted precious time in seeking, for which Hertelius would have “given a year of his life”—a comedy of Menander in perfect preservation. Meanwhile we can only console ourselves with what we have, and say with the old woman in Phædrus—

*O suavis anima ! qualem te dicam bonum
Antehac fuisse, tales cum sint reliquiæ.*

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